

RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ REVISITED • GREG GRANDIN

THE Nation.



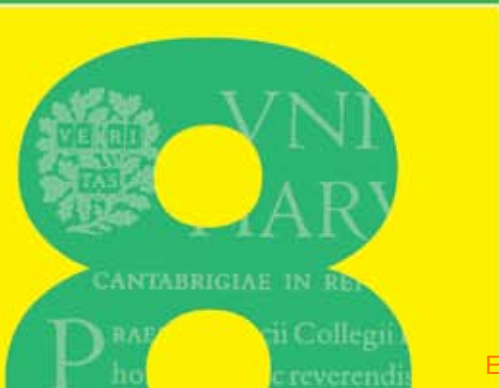
TEN THINGS DEMS COULD DO TO WIN



SEPTEMBER 27, 2010
TheNation.com



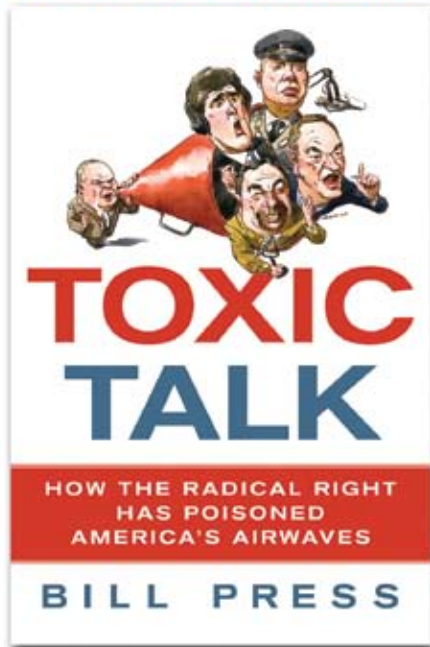
WHY THE PARTY NEEDS TO HAVE
A PLAN, KEEP IT SIMPLE—AND
DO SOMETHING FOR THE BASE
THOMAS GEOGHEGAN



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Letters

Bubble Bubble, Oil and Trouble

LOS ANGELES

Thanks for your "Freedom From Oil" issue [Aug. 2/9]. Many of the ideas proposed—e.g., getting the military to buy green—have been around for a long time; it is disappointing that they remain mostly unimplemented. The most compelling argument for getting off our butts and doing something about peak oil is energy return on investment (EROI), the ratio of the energy delivered by a process to the energy used in that process. Cutler Cleveland of Boston University has reported that the US EROI of oil and gas extraction has decreased from 100:1 in the 1930s, to 30:1 in the 1970s, to roughly 11:1 as of 2000. So for every barrel we expend, we currently receive around eleven barrels of oil. If you add the costs of damage and lost livelihood from oil spills, the EROI will be even lower. Once it takes a barrel to get a barrel, oil will be useless.

SANDY MALIGA

EAST MOLINE, ILL.

You suggest using the government's purchasing power to spur the green energy market. President Obama's executive order is a good step in that direction, but it should also be passed as legislation, because executive orders can be overturned. We must push every state, city, county, school district, park, community college, etc. to do likewise: establish these measures by executive order, then follow up with legislation.

Here in Illinois, State Representative Mike Boland has passed legislation mandating hybrid, flex-fuel or biodiesel vehicles be purchased as the state replaces vehicles, and that Energy Star lighting replace incandescent lights as they burn out in state buildings. Boland also passed legislation requiring that all new state buildings or major renovations meet LEED standards. He was joined by the Green Party candidate for governor in pushing for a \$1 billion Green Capitol bill to fund local governments and nonprofit groups to "green" their facilities. Multiply those kinds of efforts by the thousands of state and local

letters@thenation.com

governments across the country, and you will speed our nation's clean, green economy.

MIKE HUNTOON

Chief of staff to Mike Boland

BROOKLINE, MASS.

Regarding "Freedom From Oil": yes, Americans should drive their X number of miles to work in energy-efficient vehicles. But they also must cut back on that X-mile commute. Yes, people should keep warm in the winter in energy-efficient homes. But in these homes, Americans need to set the thermostat in the forties and fifties, not at sixty-eight. Yes, taxes on carbon-based fuels should be increased and payroll taxes decreased. But the payroll tax should be diminished at the rate of 10 percent per year for ten years, and the revenue burden shifted completely to taxing energy. Taxes should bring the price of energy in line with its true cost, which is several times its current price, when you account for environmental costs and the military cost of maintaining the flow of imported oil.

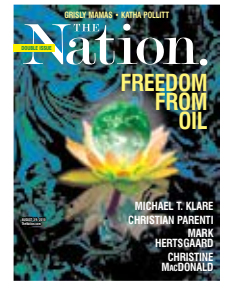
With ten years to adjust to a higher, more realistic energy price, we will figure out how to make transportation more efficient and how to do less of it. Warm winter clothing (possibly battery operated) will become fashionable as we figure out that it costs less to keep the person warm than to heat the whole house. Necessity is the mother of invention. Let us summon up our most important renewable resource: American ingenuity.

CHARLES E. ROBINSON

RICHLAND, WASH.

It is heartening to see *The Nation* tackling the complex issue of energy, particularly its acknowledging that the transformation to sustainable energy will take time. Of course, our goal should be 100 percent green energy, but there are limits to how quickly this can be done. Solar cell production requires huge amounts of ultrapure water, which the environment can't provide. Components in hybrid cars and wind turbines are often made of rare-earth min-

(continued on page 24)



Good Policy, Good Politics

The 2010 election campaign is in full swing, and the White House says President Obama is in “all economy, all the time” mode. That’s good, as nothing has plagued his presidency

more than the economic mess George W. Bush left behind. Obama isn’t going to finish cleaning things up between now and November 2, but he can renew confidence in his ability—and that of Congressional Democrats—to get America back to work. He got the rhetoric and focus right on Labor Day, bringing thousands of Milwaukee workers to their feet with a promise to invest \$50 billion in an “infrastructure plan to expand and renew our nation’s roads, railways and runways,” a clean-energy electric grid and broadband Internet for everyone. He got it even more right a few days later, with a blunt rejection of calls to keep Bush’s tax breaks for the rich. But he can’t stop now. Obama must be much bolder if he hopes to take charge of the central election debate.

The \$50 billion figure drew an immediate screech from House minority leader John Boehner. But no one should mistake GOP talking points for an indication that Obama’s new commitment is sufficient to tackle an official unemployment rate of 9.6 percent and a real rate of roughly 17 percent—let alone to reverse what the American Society of Civil Engineers describes as a “woeful” neglect of infrastructure needs.

Obama and other top Democrats have operated for too long on the theory that economically necessary moves are politically risky. They have fallen for conservative claims that federal spending is a greater concern than unemployment. But it’s both economically and politically unwise to pull punches. The 2009 Recovery Act included enough stimulus spending to avert a depression and to save or create 3.5 million jobs, but it was too cautious about public works and too compromised with tax cuts to jump-start

the economy and create the demand that could spur private-sector hiring. As a result, only about 40 percent of Americans rate Obama’s management of the economy a success. That puts Democrats at a disadvantage this November. If the president wants to change the debate—and there’s still time to do that—he must stop listening to infrastructure-phobic advisers like Larry Summers and start taking counsel from Laura Tyson, a member of his Economic Recovery Advisory Board who argues that \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment is needed over the next five years.

Tyson and other economists have developed “shovel ready” ideas as part of the New America Foundation’s “Readying a Plan B for Economic Recovery” project. James Galbraith is proposing a three-year window during which workers 62 and older could retire on full Social Security, thus opening jobs for young workers. Robert Pollin would create 3 million jobs and generate Treasury revenue by freeing \$1.1 trillion in cash reserves in the Federal Reserve accounts of private banks—with a carrot-and-stick approach that expands federal loan guarantees for small businesses by \$300 billion while taxing excess reserves held by banks (for more from Pollin, see page 23).

These are aggressive plans for forging a real recovery. Of course, Republicans will attack them. But Obama and Congressional Democrats should worry about attacking double-digit unemployment, not about “Party of No” obstruction. If Obama adopts bolder proposals, he will be able to win the jobs debate. And he and the Democrats can renew not just the economy but their popular appeal in a defining election year.

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Against Counterinsurgency

The Nation has long argued for a military disengagement from Afghanistan, combined with a new diplomatic effort aimed at reconciliation and regional stability. Over time, more and more leading foreign policy experts and opinion leaders have come to embrace this position. The latest and arguably most important example of this growing consensus is the recently released report of the Afghanistan Study Group, an ad hoc gathering of former government officials, well-known academics and policy experts assembled by the New America Foundation.

The report substantiates in cogent detail the main points of our critique of current US policy, beginning with the underlying rationale for the war. As the report notes, President Obama has justified expanding our commitment by saying the goal is to eradicate Al Qaeda. Yet the report points out that "Al Qaeda is no longer a significant presence in Afghanistan, and there are only some 400 hard-core Al Qaeda members remaining in the entire Af/Pak theater, most of them hiding in Pakistan's northwest provinces." More important, there are Al Qaeda sympathizers in many locations throughout the world, including Britain and the United States, and defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan, the report argues, will have little effect on Al Qaeda's threat to the United States. Accordingly, the report concludes that the threat from Al Qaeda would be better met via specific counterterrorism measures, a reduced US military footprint in the Islamic world and diplomatic efforts to undermine international support for militant extremism.

The report also takes issue with the official Washington view of the war as a conflict between the Karzai government and an insurgent Taliban movement allied with international terrorists. In fact, the conflict is a multifaceted civil war among various Afghan ethnic groups and regions. The Taliban, the report notes, is not a unified movement but an umbrella label applied to many armed groups and individuals, many of whom do not share the fundamentalist ideology of the most prominent Taliban leaders. With US military intervention, the conflict has also come to include resistance to foreign military occupation, thus transforming part of the conflict into a war against the United States.

Given the tenuous links between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and the fact that Al Qaeda operates in a number of countries around the world, the report argues that waging a lengthy counterinsurgency not only makes no sense but does more harm than good. Waging such a war, it says, "may well do more to aid Taliban recruiting than to dismantle the group, help spread conflict further into Pakistan, unify radical groups that might otherwise be quarreling among themselves, threaten the long-term health of the U.S. economy, and prevent the U.S. government from turning its full attention to other pressing problems."

The key to stability in Afghanistan, the report argues, is not to shore up the Karzai government but to resolve the distribution of power among various factions and between the central government and the provinces. Negotiated resolution of these conflicts will reduce the influence of extremists more readily than will military action, says the report. The Study Group

therefore proposes a way forward that emphasizes power-sharing and political inclusion, that downsizes and eventually ends US military operations, and that engages regional and global stakeholders in diplomacy designed to guarantee Afghan neutrality and foster regional stability.

We are pleased to note that the basic position this magazine has long proposed has now become the clear alternative to General Petraeus's long counterinsurgency war.

Greene to Green in SC?

Among the many electoral challenges Democrats face this fall is the mess in South Carolina, where the party should be giving the fire-breathing dragon of the Republican right, Senator Jim DeMint, a hard time in his re-election bid. DeMint, who promised Republicans that if they could block healthcare reform it would be President Obama's "Waterloo," has led the GOP's "Party of No" push. He's fiercely ambitious, stirring talk of a possible presidential bid in 2012, and right now he's traveling the country to help elect rigidly right-wing Republicans.

However, instead of tying DeMint down with a muscular challenge and raising hopes of an upset (as is happening with Democrat Elaine Marshall's run against North Carolina's first-term Republican senator, Richard Burr), the Democratic drive

in the Palmetto State has become a national punch line. Party leaders had planned to nominate Vic Rawl, a former legislator and judge; instead, they got Alvin Greene, a surprise primary winner who has been unemployed since his involuntary discharge from the military—after superiors voiced concerns about his disorganization and inability to express his thoughts clearly. House majority whip James Clyburn suggested that Greene, who tried to pay his \$10,400 primary filing fee with a personal check, might be a Republican plant, an idea that seems less farfetched after the revelation that Arizona Republicans recruited drifters to file as Green candidates in a scheme to siphon support from Democrats. Greene denies he's a ringer. But the nominee was still asked to withdraw by state party chair Carol Fowler after it was revealed that he faced felony obscenity charges, on which he has since been indicted. But Greene has stayed on the ballot, which has put top Democrats in a terrible position. They can't back DeMint, but they can't back their nominee either.

If only there was an alternative! If only there was a credible contender with a record of local, state and national activism, with a firm grasp of the issues, thoughtful progressive positions and an easygoing yet professional style.

Well, there is. Green Party nominee Tom Clements will share the November ballot with DeMint and Greene. Clements is a native Southerner who worked for thirteen years with Greenpeace International and directed the Nuclear

Noted.

RUN, RAHM, RUN: Chicago Mayor **Richard Daley's** announcement that he will not seek a seventh term has prompted speculation that White House chief of staff **Rahm Emanuel** will run for Daley's post. "I'd be shocked if he doesn't run," a senior administration official told the *Washington Post*.

The sooner Emanuel leaves Washington, the better for **Barack Obama**. His White House is desperately in need of a serious shake-up, especially with Democrats facing a tidal wave of losses in the midterms. I'll never quite understand why a transformational candidate chose the ultimate old-school inside operator to control his administration. Emanuel isn't solely to blame for diluting Obama's outsider brand, but he's a major factor. In the Clinton White House and in Congress, he was often at odds with the very grassroots activists who powered Obama's campaign. As chair of the **Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee** in 2006,

he famously clashed with party chair **Howard Dean** and recruited Blue Dog candidates at the expense of progressive challengers. He brought his corporate centrism to the White House, pushing for a smaller-than-needed stimulus bill, urging Obama not to pursue healthcare reform, watering down the bill when he did and calling progressive activists who wanted to pressure obstructionist Democrats "fucking retarded."

Emanuel's alleged biggest asset—his ties to Capitol Hill and intricate knowledge of Beltway politics—has paid few dividends for Obama. The president's legislative agenda has hit a brick wall in the Senate, and the dysfunction of the Democratic Congress, which Emanuel did little to tame, helps explain why voters are set to punish the party in power this November. "If picking the leading practitioner of the dark arts of the capital was a Faustian bargain for Obama in the name of getting things done, why haven't things got done?" asked **Peter Baker** of the *New York Times* in a profile titled "The Limits of Rahmism."

In a series of articles last spring, Emanuel or those close to him were quoted blaming others in the Obama White House for the president's problems. But if Emanuel really is the most powerful chief of staff in modern history, then he deserves his share of the blame when things don't go according to plan, especially since he devised the plan.

So what, exactly, qualifies Emanuel to run America's third-largest city? That's what the **Progressive Campaign Change Committee** and other critics are asking. "I will not support Rahm Emanuel in any future election for Congress, Mayor of Chicago, Governor, or other office," says a petition drafted September 7 by the PCCC. "He sold us out on the public option and is a weak Democrat who caves instead of fighting conservatives and corporate power."

It's not too late for Obama to turn his presidency around, reconnect with the supporters who propelled him to the White House and reclaim his ambitious legislative agenda. But to do so, he'll need fewer Emanuels in the building.

ARI BERMAN

Control Institute before taking over in 2008 as southeastern coordinator for Friends of the Earth. He was a campaign manager to former Georgia Congressman Doug Bernard, an experienced player on the international stage since his days as a leading antiproliferation campaigner and an able spokesman on issues ranging from environmental racism to global warming to the green economy. Clements is economically populist, socially progressive and antiwar. And he knows the race should be about DeMint, not the foibles of his Democratic challenger. Accusing the incumbent of being so interested in national political positioning that he has gone “AWOL from South Carolina,” Clements says it is folly to focus on Alvin Greene’s troubles. “I want [this race] to be about, Where is Jim DeMint, and why doesn’t Jim DeMint come back to South Carolina to face the voters and discuss the issues?” says Clements, who has gained steady coverage with his demand that the senator debate.

But could Democrats get comfortable with a candidate from the Green Party? Are they over the bitter memories of the 2000 presidential race, when Democrats accused Green presidential nominee Ralph Nader of peeling off just enough votes in Florida and New Hampshire to elect George W. Bush? They should be. A lot has changed in the past decade. Traditional Green issues, such as climate change and sustainability, have gone mainstream. Greens keep winning local elections, with 140-plus party members serving as mayors, county commissioners and school board members in dozens of states—including South Carolina. And Democrats would do well to recognize that the Greens have skipped runs that might have drawn votes away from progressive Democrats such as Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold.

So why not consider Clements as the alternative to DeMint? Why not back the Green Party nominee’s call for debates and help him get media attention and perhaps even sufficient funding for a serious TV campaign? Of course, it’s an uphill race in Strom Thurmond’s native state, but why not give DeMint the most credible challenge possible?

That’s the question a number of South Carolina Democrats are asking. Several local party groups have invited Clements to

address their events, with the Lower Richland Democrats in Columbia observing, “Many of us Democrats are dismayed at the outcome of our primary for the US Senate. But for those of us who are passionate about providing economic opportunity for working families, saving our democracy from corporate control and saving our planet from irresponsible polluters, we have a viable alternative: Tom Clements.” The Greater Columbia Central Labor Council of the South Carolina AFL-CIO has formally endorsed Clements as the candidate who “will best represent the interests of the working people of South Carolina.”

Democrats and Greens are not about to paper over their differences anytime soon. But the South Carolina race presents savvy Democrats with an opportunity to avoid embarrassment, back a great progressive and give Jim DeMint the hard time he so richly deserves.

JOHN NICHOLS

Schools vs. Slogans

This is the inaugural essay in a new series of bimonthly pieces on the politics of education by Nation editorial board member Pedro Noguera.

—The Editors

On August 24 Education Secretary Arne Duncan announced the ten winners of the latest Race to the Top competition. “These states show what is possible when adults come together to do the right thing for children,” said Duncan. The winners—the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio and Rhode Island—were understandably thrilled. Each will receive tens of millions of dollars (large states, even more) to implement reforms that the administration believes will spur innovation and promote academic excellence.

The losers, however, were more than just mildly disappointed. Some, like the governors of Colorado and New Jersey, were enraged. Chris Christie, New Jersey’s new conservative governor, blamed bureaucrats at the Education Department, then sacked his education commissioner. Colorado Governor Bill Ritter, a Democrat once seen as an Obama ally, claimed his state’s exclusion was part of a “communist plot” and charged that it reflected a bias against Western states.

Their anger over Race to the Top, while a bit extreme, is nonetheless understandable. The bad news comes at a time when states across the country are making severe cuts to public education. As the nation struggles to emerge from recession, school districts nationwide have been forced to lay off teachers in droves, defer maintenance and repairs to school buildings and, in states like California and Michigan, allow class sizes to increase to levels never before seen.

The administration should receive some credit for trying to reform public education and for directing some of the federal stimulus funds to support its goals. However, by choosing to reward some states over others because they followed the preferred reform strategy, the administration runs the risk of

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

The United States Ends Combat Missions in Iraq

We’ve gotten out—well, not exactly out.
So now we wonder, What was that about?
We lost a lot—a lot in lives and treasure.
So could it be that there’s a way to measure
The end result? Well, yes, I think I can:
We made the world much safer for Iran.

alienating more than just a couple of governors. At a time when so little is going in its favor, the Obama administration has adopted policies on education that have angered an important part of its base—teachers and their unions.

With backup from the Bill & Melinda Gates and Eli and Edythe Broad foundations, the administration has focused its reform efforts on four strategies: raising academic standards, expanding charter schools, evaluating the performance of teachers using student test scores and turning around chronically underperforming schools. In its “Blueprint” for education, released in March, all four strategies were touted as initiatives that will lead to better schools and higher levels of student achievement.

Despite the administration’s preference for “evidence-based” measures, however, ideology and favoritism rather than sound research appear to be the primary rationales for the policy direction it has prescribed.

For example, the administration recently awarded \$50 million through its innovation grants to Teach for America (TFA). Many liberals and conservatives are enthusiastic about the program because it provides teaching jobs to Ivy League graduates. They are dispatched, with little training, to the most challenging schools, in high-poverty communities (and they typically stick around for no more than two years). But a growing body of research shows that low-income children need highly trained teachers. Indeed, it is telling that KIPP—the Knowledge Is Power Program, an organization that runs a number of relatively successful charter schools, and whose CEO is married to TFA’s CEO—will hire TFA fellows only as assistants until they have proven their effectiveness in the classroom.

Or consider the uneven record of charter schools, also heavily promoted by the administration. In states such as Ohio, Arizona and California, many charter schools are floundering, and unlike traditional public schools, they are not required to meet state performance standards. Charter schools are largely an urban phenomenon, so in many rural areas in Western states where one public school may serve children from a wide geographic area, the push for charter schools makes no sense at all. Finally, there is clear evidence that in many of the better charter schools there is a deliberate effort to exclude children who are hard to serve—English language learners, or students with learning disabilities or severe behavior problems. It is unfair for charter schools and their proponents to claim success when they are allowed to screen or push out students who are hard to teach. Invariably, those students end up back in public schools, which are then penalized for the lower performance that results.

In keeping with the administration’s interest in evaluating teachers based on student test scores, the *Los Angeles Times* ran a series of articles in August that discussed the relationship between teacher efficacy and student test scores. In a bold and controversial ploy the *Times* released the names and test-score rankings of individual teachers. While advocates like Washington, DC, school chancellor Michelle Rhee applauded the move as “the right approach to accountability,” critics pointed out the numerous problems with judging teachers in such a narrow manner, given the high mobility rates of students and

the wide variety of factors influencing their performance on standardized tests.

The call for states to adopt strategies to turn around failing schools is perhaps the most ambitious and troubling of the administration’s proposals. The Education Department has estimated that as many as 5,000 of the nation’s schools are failing. Secretary Duncan has referred to them as “dropout factories” and called for them to be improved or shut down. Yet, while his concern about school failure is well placed, it seems Duncan must not have read a recent study that analyzed the results of seven years of reform in the Chicago district he led before his cabinet appointment. The University of Chicago study, which ironically was written with John Easton, appointed by Duncan to lead the Institute of Education Sciences, found that in schools serving the neediest children, those the authors described as the “truly disadvantaged,” new curriculums, increased funding for books, technology and teacher training, and even extreme pressure failed to produce the improvements the system sought to bring about. The study concluded that these schools did not improve because they lacked the ability to respond to the tremendous nonacademic needs of the children they serve.

This disconnect between the realities of public schools and the policy prescriptions coming from Washington is the crux of the problem. The policy wonks guiding the administration seem to think that the only thing wrong with No Child Left Behind—the law adopted by the Bush administration to guide education policy—is that the slogan got a bad name because it promised far more than it could deliver. Instead of developing a new strategy, they’ve merely devised a new slogan, Race to the Top, without really understanding what it might take to move the nation’s schools forward.

Given its desire to turn around failing schools, it’s unfortunate that the administration has not closely examined the experiences of the small but significant number of schools that have gone from failing to high performing, and used the strategies they’ve employed to promote success on a larger scale—schools like PS 12 in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. In 2006, PS 12 was identified by the State of New York as a school in need of improvement. In 2009, the school was awarded an A by the New York City Education Department because 58 percent of its students had achieved proficiency in reading, and 92 percent in math. Much of the credit for this turnaround can be attributed to the leadership of Nyree Dixon, the 33-year-old principal. In three years Dixon focused on improving instruction by deploying her best math and literacy teachers as coaches for other teachers so that they could provide direct support in the classroom. She reached out to parents to get their support and cooperation to improve school safety. She worked with a local nonprofit to create an after-school program, and later a summer program, focused on academic acceleration (not remediation). Dixon explains her improvement efforts this way:

“We’ve been willing to try everything, from changing the curriculum to changing the makeup of classrooms [boys and girls are now separated for literacy classes in the fourth grade]. We evaluate everything we do, but we also know that we’ve got to get this community involved. My kids need a lot, and

Bug Tussle

The *New York Times* recently reported that bedbugs have invaded scores of thousands of residences throughout the city, triggering widespread itching and ostracism. This most vile and criminal occupation also unleashed a chattering horde of scared and outraged Americans in the Twitterverse:

GROUNDZADJACENT: Anybody besides me more worried about bedbugs than mosques and terrorists?

MISSMEYET: You're either with us, or you're with the bedbugs. #Dubya

SENJOHNMcMAVERICK: We will be at war with these bedbugs for 100 years.

FAIRE&BALDFACED: Why didn't Obama heed that mid-summer Presidential Daily Brief: bin Bedbugs Determined to Strike in US?

DUBYA: The bedbugs must not be allowed to establish a safe haven in the mountainous regions of Central Park. #MissMeYet?

HalfGovSarahP: We should ask the Norwegians or the Dutch for help with the bedbugs.

WELOVEPUPPIES: All bedbugs in the Gulf have been dispersed. #BP #nothingtoseehere

REVGRAHAMCRACKER: You know who else is born of the seed of Islam? Bedbugs.

HALFGovSARAHp: Peace-seeking bedbugs, this provocation stabs heart, pls refudiate erection of yr pest mecca so close 2 hollowed Ground 0.

COLDDEADHANDS: The 2nd Amendment prohibits us from restricting the bedbug's right to bear arms.

SCOTUS_INC: The Supreme Court has ruled that bedbugs are people too. #FreedomOfLeech

HAIRCLUBFORGROWTH: If we let the Bush Tax Cuts expire, the entire bedbug economy will collapse.

KNICKKNUT: If only the bedbugs would go to Miami to play with Dwayne Wade.

TEXAS.EDU/ORWELL: All school texts will henceforth refer to the bedbug invasion as "Obama's sole policy accomplishment."

BIDENMYTIME: Combat operations are over. But 50,000 will stay behind to train legitimate bedbugs to fight the insurgent bedbugs.

APOCALYPSEDOWCHEMICAL: I love the smell of bedbugs in the morning.

UNDISCLOSEDLOCATION: I think we should simply greet the bedbugs as liberators.

STEVE WEINSTEIN

Steve Weinstein (Twitter: @steveweinstein) is a writer in Los Angeles and author of the book A Wish Can Change Your Life.

there's no way we can do it all by ourselves. I've been able to get parents and community agencies to work with us, and this has made a big difference."

Turning around a failing school sounds so simple when you listen to someone who actually knows what she's doing. The question is, Why isn't the administration listening to people like Dixon? When so much is going wrong, the administration and its allies in Congress need an issue by which they can demonstrate that their leadership is making a difference. Education could still be that issue if the administration changes its tone when challenging allies, distributes federal funds in a manner that allows successful practices to grow throughout the country and not just a few lucky states and adopts a more integrated approach to schools in high-poverty areas, one that links school reform to improvements in health and economic opportunities.

The clock is ticking, and time is running out for the Obama administration to show the critical members of his base in the education community that it can deliver on its promise of change we can believe in.

PEDRO NOGUERA

Pedro Noguera, a professor of sociology at New York University, is the author of City Schools and the American Dream and co-editor of Unfinished Business: Closing the Racial Achievement Gap in Our Schools.

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A million and a half teenagers were unemployed this summer and didn't want to be. What does that mean besides less spending money for teens? Plenty, writes Liz Shuler in **Sorry, Kids, No Jobs Here**.



Visit TheNation.com for the return of Washington editor Christopher Hayes's weekly podcast, **The Breakdown!** This week: what can the Federal Reserve do to stimulate the economy?



In **US Profile on Human Rights Grows at the United Nations**, Barbara Crossette reports that the Obama administration, emerging as a strong voice on human rights issues within the UN, has submitted its first appraisal of the US's own human rights record.



Watch **Ari Melber on MSNBC** talking about how the filibuster compromises our political system—and why that means the majority should rule.



One year later, the blockbuster *Game Change* can be read as much for how little election narratives explain about history as for the story of the 2008 campaign, writes Julian Zelizer in **How Much Do We Learn From the First Cut of History?**



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Patricia J. Williams

Freshmen Specimen

The school year at the University of California, Berkeley, began with a swab. In a program called Bring Your Genes to Cal, 5,500 incoming freshmen were asked to provide samples of their saliva in an experiment designed to bring the student body together in the same manner that reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* might have in the past. The more than 700 students who responded had their DNA analyzed in Berkeley's (uncertified) labs, assessed for susceptibility to alcoholism, lactose intolerance and relative metabolism of folic acid. The exercise provoked an international debate about the ethics of the assignment. Ultimately, the California Department of Public Health barred the university from dispensing individual profiles on the grounds that genetic analysis is correlative only and is neither necessarily predictive nor diagnostic at this point. A collective comparison of the class's genetic data was permitted, however, and circulated in "anonymized" form at orientation.

There are several reasons that Berkeley's undertaking should give us pause. The first and most obvious is that of privacy: this information reveals more than we can yet interpret at the singular, embodied level of human identity. DNA decoding will become infinitely more precise in the near future, and with that growing precision in familial tracking and biological identification, "anonymizing" results by removing names and Social Security numbers will mean less and less.

Second, Who owns, or ought to own, these data? Although the Berkeley experiment is framed as an exploration of a vast genetic commons, this information is the subject of intense commercial speculation. And the degree to which specific gene sequences may be patented is quite contested in the law. Should you, as the biological vessel of a particularly exploitable bit of genetic material, receive any remuneration? Are your genes to be valued, in purely pecuniary terms, as akin to a deposit of oil beneath your land? Once genes are patented, can rival researchers be barred from working on the same material?

Another problem with Berkeley's DNA swabbing is that it perpetuates the assumption that DNA analysis is as good as or the same as personalized medicine. Despite large gaps in understanding and the astonishing absence of standards, the results of genetic research are often held as being far more definitive than yet shown. The mere phrase "genetic correlation" is heard as a 100 percent infallible guarantee of whatever follows. This assumption is often implicit in the advertising of some direct-to-consumer companies like Navigenics and 23andMe. Indeed, both companies were hired to analyze the results of a medical school class's "spit party" at Stanford University recently.

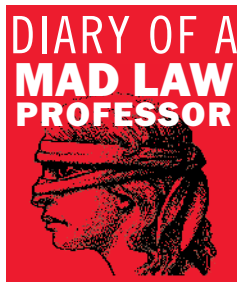
On July 22, however, the Government Accountability Office issued a report that advised consumers of the scientific uncertainty of individual results, in which assessments of risk varied widely

from company to company. The GAO also found "10 egregious examples of deceptive marketing, including claims made by four companies that a consumer's DNA could be used to create a personalized supplement to cure diseases. Two of these companies further stated that their supplements could 'repair damaged DNA' or cure disease, even though experts confirmed there is no scientific basis for such claims.... Two other companies asserted that they could predict in which sports children would excel based on DNA analysis, claims that an expert characterized as 'complete garbage.' Further, two companies told GAO's fictitious consumer that she could secretly test her fiancé's DNA to 'surprise' him with test results—though this practice is restricted in 33 states. Perhaps most disturbing, one company told a donor that an above average risk prediction for breast cancer meant she was 'in the high risk of pretty much getting' the disease, a statement that experts found to be 'horrifying' because it implies the test is diagnostic."

This is not to say that genetic testing shows nothing at all, but the results inform only at the aggregate level or as a set of probabilities. This explicitly aggregate data collection has been the subject of yet another controversial program, called Gopher Kids, conducted by the University of Minnesota at the annual state fair. At a booth adorned with balloons and a cute animal mascot, researchers offered free T-shirts and amusement park rides to parents and children willing to submit saliva swabs and answer a lengthy questionnaire about lifestyle. The university advertises participation as altruistic, a contribution to public health and human knowledge. The problem with this is that, again, the law is not settled about whether our genetic makeup is more the property of the excavating mind of the scientist or the individual property of a particular identified body.

Finally, there is the question of motive. Spit parties are boosted as ways to get to know one another in the social realm—as though it were a collective séance or a big, slimy Ouija board. But the real reasons that so many companies market swabbing kits is not entirely altruistic: there is huge money to be made in expanding the data sets as broadly as possible. The predictive probabilities involved in reading genes for disease or physique or ancestry can become more precise only by sifting through data of whole populations and then correlating frequencies of particular conditions with particular genetic clusterings. This, it is thought, will be very valuable in devising and marketing pharmaceuticals, as well as in forensic identification technologies.

As we enter the genomic era, we should be more thoughtful about the ends for which our bodies are being mined. The redemptive thrill of being co-creators of some medical miracle must be measured against the possibility that we are rendering fungible that which most profoundly distinguishes us and, in the name of a gift, enabling a commodity exchange in which important aspects of our identities will be sold to the highest bidder. ■



Eric Alterman

Money Well Spent

Jane Mayer's *New Yorker* profile of Charles and David Koch reveals a decades-long investment of many hundreds of millions of dollars to achieve a single goal. The billionaire oilmen sought to "bring about social change" to advance what Charles Koch calls their "radical philosophy." To make this happen, they've adopted a "vertically and horizontally integrated" strategy "from idea creation to policy development to education to grassroots organizations to lobbying to litigation to political action."

How radical? When, in 1980, David Koch ran for vice president on the Libertarian Party ticket—a race he also funded—his platform called for the abolition of Social Security, minimum-wage laws, gun control, all personal and corporate income taxes and much else. A worried William F. Buckley Jr. called it "Anarcho-Totalitarianism."

What the Kochs were doing, as Mayer astutely notes, is implementing the strategy originally laid out by Lewis Powell's now infamous 1971 memo to the director of the US Chamber of Commerce, by which the political culture of the United States would be transformed on behalf of individuals and corporations of great wealth. The primary obstacle Powell identified was not the remnants of the late-'60s antiwar and civil rights movements, which were both in the process of disintegration. Rather, they sought to undermine the "respectable elements of society" and replace them with people like themselves.

We are all well aware of the success of the likes of Rupert Murdoch, Rush Limbaugh, the editors of the *Wall Street Journal*, Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly, etc., in reorienting the media in a right-wing, xenophobic direction. But to focus exclusively on the conservative media—as I sometimes do—is a bit like worrying only about the oil slicks on the surface of a river and ignoring the gushers underneath.

The Kochs, after all, do not fund much media. Rather, they fund the politicians, "experts" and (frequently phony) citizen leaders who create the context for the content of media debate. And perhaps their greatest success has been their ability to turn the establishment media into the credulous carrier of the constant stream of propaganda their grantees have become so adept at producing.

Way back in late 1986, Elliott Abrams complained to me about what he called the "liberal establishment line," which considered Ronald Reagan's Star Wars program to be "madness" and US support of the Contras in Nicaragua to be "wrong." "But now," he observed, "they're cracking." How right he was.

Most establishment liberals, particularly those appointed to play the role of the "liberal" in the media, eventually made their peace with both of Reagan's obsessions in the coming years. They did not do so, to put it mildly, because history proved the right-

wingers correct. Regarding Star Wars, since Reagan proposed the program in 1983, the American government has wasted countless billions seeking technological breakthroughs that have never materialized, and yet no Democratic president or any significant Congressional committee chair has ever proposed admitting that the program is an unmitigated failure. Regarding the Contras, we had not only the revelations of the Iran/Contra scandal, the US-funded and -supported terrorism against civilian targets, and the exposure of Abrams as an ideologue so committed to his beliefs that he was willing to perjure himself before Congress to hide his actions and those of the administration. And yet not only was Abrams completely rehabilitated by the Republican right—pardoned by the first President Bush and nominated by the second one to oversee Middle East policy in the National Security Council—he is now the most visible "expert" on the topic for the Council on Foreign Relations, a "liberal establishment"

institution if ever there was one. When he is quoted in the media, it is always respectfully, and never with reference to his demonstrated dishonest and criminal actions in the Reagan administration.

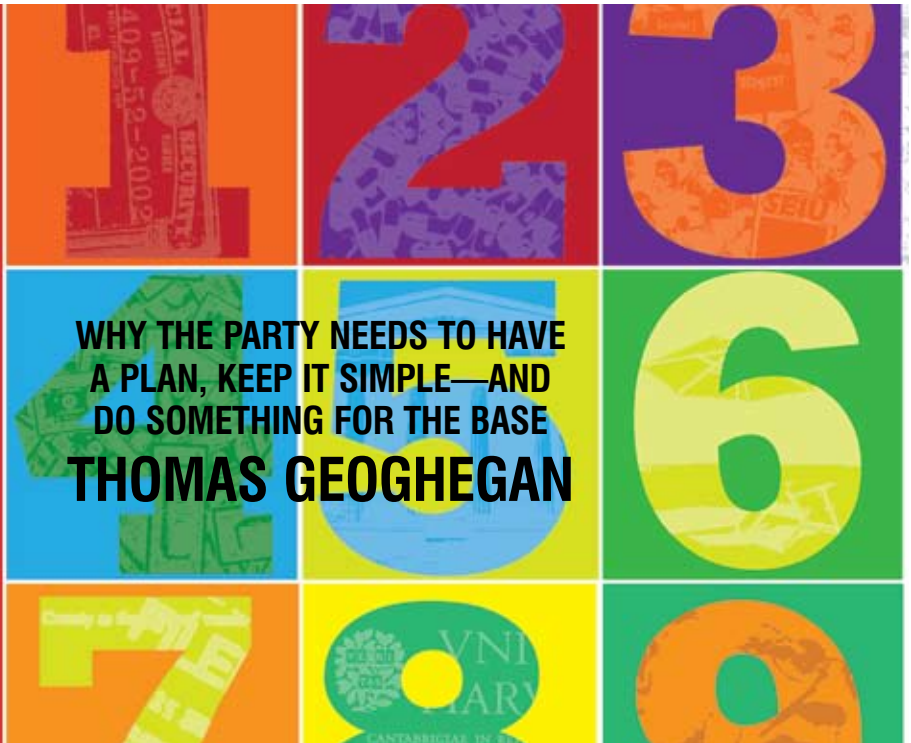
In other words, the "respectable elements of society" decided they would rather switch than fight; capitulating to the forty-year onslaught to which the Kochs and their comrades have subjected them in the name of Powell's plans. The right has redefined the playing field to the point where ex-House speaker

Newt Gingrich, who occupies no official government position and regularly spews mindless and vicious hatred toward Muslims, liberals and just about anyone else with whom he disagrees, could be the most frequently invited guest on *Meet the Press* in 2009, a year in which the presidency, the House and the Senate were all controlled by Democrats. (The actual House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, did not even appear once; neither did any other former House speakers. In fact, no ex-House speaker other than Gingrich has ever appeared on *Meet the Press*.) We have reached a point where George Will can spout misinformation about climate science on the *Washington Post* op-ed page and still be treated as a font of wisdom on ABC News and elsewhere. "Reality" matters even less than it did in the days when Reagan proposed his Star Wars fantasy and Abrams began his campaign of lies to Congress so that US-backed killers could wipe out entire Central American villages and get themselves compared to America's founding fathers.

I could go on forever with such examples. But the point of Mayer's dogged research is that none of this happened by accident. The Kochs, like the Coorses, the Scaifes, the Murdochs and countless others before them, invested in the long term. And thanks to their patient capital, the "respectable elements of society" have turned over the keys to the kingdom in return for being allowed to keep a few of their perks. And if that creates problems for America's foreign-born, Muslim, Christian-hating president, well, that just makes it money well spent. ■



TEN THINGS DEMS COULD DO TO WIN



Yes, the country is in a foul mood, with 15 million unemployed. The Democrats may get clobbered in 2010. And even if we survive, how do we hang on for the long term? If our great founder, FDR, could come back to us, he might remind us of the three simple rules that once, long ago, Democrats used to follow:

1. Do something for your base.
2. Do something for your base.
3. Do something for your base.

Seriously: why can't we do something for our base? It's been almost a half-century since we Democrats did something for our base, when Lyndon Johnson pushed through Medicare, i.e., "socialized medicine" for seniors. And while some may compare the new Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 to Medicare, there's a big difference. To the public, the new law seems to benefit only the uninsured: the young or the marginal, few of whom will even vote in 2010 (maybe just a third of the electorate will). So while the new law is a big help to them, it does nothing for the rest of our base, especially our smaller core base that will vote in the midterms. Indeed, it seems to penalize our base, or at least raise their taxes, at a time when they have lost a big chunk of their 401(k) pensions, or their jobs, or even their homes—and if they're lucky and still have a job, they may be working just three instead of five days a week. These are the very people who voted us in. "Yes, we can!" And they watched, dumbfounded, as Congress virtually forgot their plight in our struggle to raise their taxes to give benefits to a lot of red-state uninsured who may never say thank you, and whose twenty or so red states are now trying to overturn the law.

Of course I'm in favor, wildly in favor, of this civilized and humane step toward healthcare for all. But after forty-five years of doing nothing for the people who register as Democrats, we might have kicked off 2010 by doing something for our base.

Yes, of course a fraction of our base, the uninsured, will benefit. But we could have started by doing something really big to reward or empower *everyone* in our base. Indeed, it's a puzzle that someone with Obama's acumen would not have done more to keep intact all these old-time Democrats and others who lifted him up to the White House in the last weeks of the election after Wall Street collapsed.

By the way, FDR would be the first to tell us it's not enough to do something for our base. Here are three other little rules we should follow when we do something for our base:

1. Keep it simple. The healthcare bill not only did nothing for our base; it was hard to understand. Every initiative should be capable of being put down in a single sentence or two. "Financial reform" is fine, but the Dodd-Frank Act is too hard to sum up coherently to our base on even an index card, much less a bumper sticker.

2. Make it universal. People on the left have all sorts of ideas for programs that turn out to be available only to a select few. By contrast take FDR's big ideas, like Social Security. Not everyone is on it, but sooner or later we all are headed there. If we're not there, our parents are. Likewise, Medicare: we'll all get there. The public option, which was left out of the healthcare law, was a nice idea and all, but in the end it would have been available only for a few.

Finally, the last and most important rule:

3. Make it add up to a plan. I mean, let's go beyond "the vision thing" and let people know we have a plan. Obama will not bring back the American economy of golden memory. The deficit will be horrendous. We may have to get used to unemployment of 7 percent, a 7 percent that covers up a bigger percent of people working just three instead of five days a week. FDR did not end the Depression, either. But people were patient because they knew he had a plan. He was rebuilding the economy from the

bottom up, and it paid off, not in the 1930s but in the unionized, high-benefits postwar decades after he died.

People will be patient with us and keep us in power if they think we have a plan.

In this spirit here are ten things the Democrats could push this fall that not only do something for our base but (1) are simple, (2) appeal to at least half or more of the country and (3) add up to a plan.



Raise Social Security to 50 percent of working income.

Let's stop saying we will "save" Social Security. Don't save it. Raise it. Let's push Social Security up to 50 percent of people's income. It's down at about 39 percent now. Of course we can't do this overnight, but we can set it as a serious goal. Here at last we would be doing something for our base. I mean, who are we for, right? Yet even on "our" side, the cognoscenti want to cut it. Even Barack Obama spoke in his 2009 State of the Union address about "strengthening" Social Security—by which he meant cutting or at least capping it. Fine, we're running a deficit. Go ahead, listen to "respectable" voices, all the Congressional Budget Office types. But we're the Democrats. Who are we for? Private pensions have disappeared. People's homes have lost value or are in foreclosure. Don't tell me how Social Security is more generous than ever. With the collapse of the private pension system and the popping of bubbles, we need to expand the public pension system as never before.

"Wait. It will be tough enough to make the current system solvent. Where's the money to come from?" Let's put aside the fact that Social Security is solvent—or at least sure to be solvent until 2040, which satisfies me but not kids in their 20s. Fine, let's fix it for the long term as well. But as long as we're going to take the heat to make the current system "solvent" even for people under 40, i.e., to "save" Social Security even for them, we might as well raise it, too. After all, our real base voters are more likely to get off their couches and vote for us if we burn into their brains that their worst worries about retirement are over. There are three sources of a fiscal fix, not just to save but to raise it. The Democrats should propose all three:

First, restore the estate tax that existed in the 1950s and '60s and dedicate the proceeds to the Social Security trust—as Robert Ball, former Social Security commissioner, once proposed. (One might think of it as a backdoor form of means testing. At least we should get back the Social Security we paid the deceased.)

I know, "A majority of Americans oppose the estate tax." Let's find out if they do if it means they don't have to worry about dying broke.

Second, lift the cap on the Social Security tax (it's at \$90,000 now) so it applies to all incomes. After all, Social Security is for everyone. If people above \$90,000 are in it, then they should be in it all the way.

Third, cancel the huge tax deduction on the most wasteful

sorts of corporate debt, especially the kind used for speculation and leveraged buyouts. Dedicate that new revenue to raising Social Security. It's a deduction we should get rid of anyway, for good and independent reasons. It's that deduction that has encouraged the leveraged buyouts and looting of corporations by private equity funds and all the other speculation that caused Wall Street to crack up.

"But in the long run, don't we have to raise people's taxes, especially to get above 50 percent?" Yes, I admit, we do have to raise the tax. Right now, I would not propose to go immediately to 50 percent. But there's nothing wrong with this increase if people grasp that they are spending it on themselves—that was the flaw in the Obama healthcare plan, where the higher taxes went solely to "other people."

"But there's a generational equity problem. We're asking the young to subsidize the old." So David Brooks complains. That's his kick against the welfare state. Why is that a problem? Since the time of Adam and Eve, that's why people have had children—to support them in old age. Besides, would you as a young person rather pay for Mom and Dad out of your own wallet? Raising Social Security does plenty for the young—and they are freaked out about their retirement too.

Then it might be easier to cut healthcare costs.

Why is it that in European social democracies people spend far less on healthcare but are healthier at every income level? Thanks to better pensions, they have healthier lives.

In short, if we wanted to cut healthcare from 17 percent of GDP and wean our base away from endless visits to doctors, we might try giving them bigger pensions on which to live. They might accept caps on Medicare if it meant we could give out bigger pensions for healthier lives.

Democrats! The next time we promise a cutback in Medicare, let's promise that the savings will go to raising Social Security in return.



Let's extend Medicare to people 55 to 65.

Remember FDR's first rule. Keep it simple. I can't think of anything simpler and easier for people to grasp than for the Democrats to propose extending Medicare to age 55.

And start now.

For a moment, during the healthcare debate, this idea caught on in the Senate. We should try again. Why? For the purpose of the midterm elections, it should be obvious. People age 55 to 65 are the people who vote.

Remember Bush's drug program, as expensive as it was? At least it made sure that in 2004 he won the state of Florida. The second time, Florida was not even close.

But there are more principled reasons, too. First, we have to make the country more competitive. That means we have to take over the healthcare costs employers pay. Before we get to single payer, let's start with the most medically expensive employees, those age 55 to 65. How do we pitch it?

First, "be competitive." If the government takes over these costs from employers, we lower labor costs. Didn't getting out of retiree healthcare costs (people often 55 to 65) help revive GM and Chrysler? Extend Medicare, and it's like a

Thomas Geoghegan is a labor lawyer and author. His most recent book is Were You Born on the Wrong Continent? How the European Model Can Help You Get a Life (The New Press).

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GM-Chrysler bailout across the board. If we're going to compete with European social democracies like Germany, which are now booming thanks to exports, maybe we need to resort to a bit more "socialist" healthcare to lower our labor costs and let us outsell them.

Let's put America first, right?

Second, as we lift the Social Security retirement age from 65 to 67, we should put those in the 55 to 65 category on an even playing field in terms of labor costs. Indeed, if we expect people to last longer in the workforce, we should do more to sustain them, like Elijah, for the journey.

Third, people age 55 to 65 right now have to cross a kind of no man's land. That's the worker category most vulnerable to getting sick and the one employers have the strongest incentive to cut. This demographic alone could re-elect the Democrats in 2010: think how many are being pushed out for "early retirement." The promise of Medicare picking up their healthcare costs might cause many a boss to hold off the ax.

How to pay? Most of the cost could come from an automatic surcharge—remember, these people aren't paying premiums.

Some may say, "That's a fine idea, but it's too late—the whole healthcare thing is over." But this one, conceptually, is easy. It's certainly a majority vote in the Senate: if anything is budget reconciliation, it's a one-page change in the eligibility rules. Instead of 2,000 pages to say what we're changing, all we need is one. All we need is fifty Democratic votes.

It does something for our base, especially the base likely to vote in the midterms.

It meets all three of FDR's little rules:

It is simple.

It is universal, like Medicare itself.

And it adds up to a plan to bring back the economy and lift the middle class.

If pulling this group off the insurance rolls doesn't bring insurance rates down, then there's every reason to liquidate what's left of the insurance industry. Seriously, what's private insurance left to do?



Make it a civil right to join, or not to join, a labor union.

Remember: organized labor is not our base. The working people of the country are our base. We have to repackage labor law reform, even over the protest of organized labor itself. Except for those in the big white buildings in Washington, few working people understand the Wagner Act. Few understand card checks or secret ballot elections or mandatory first-time arbitration. Few labor lawyers understand it. So make it simple: instead of trying to fiddle with an old 1935 law based on a collectivist view of the world, let's bring labor law up to date. How? Let's amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to give the same individual type of civil right to join—or, yes, not to join—a union.

Elsewhere I have argued that letting working people hire their own lawyers, go to court, take discovery, rifle the files and get awards of legal fees would do more to bring back the labor movement than to go on bottling it up in a single

federal agency like the National Labor Relations Board. If we amend the Civil Rights Act and let people go to court for any employer reprisal to block a union, and to let the rank and file get their own lawyers and start handing out subpoenas, we'll get back a labor movement fast.

Keep in mind: the works councils and other forms of worker control fervidly supported by unions now in Germany at first did not have much support from unions there.

But how to sell it?

Tell people their rights will trump the rights of the union as an institution.

That includes the right not to pay dues, not to pay a cent, i.e., a completely voluntary labor movement. "My God, unions will never survive." I want to say, Nonsense: they all survive in Europe. But it's true; Europe really is different. For one thing, there is nothing like our unbalanced US Senate to block labor friendly laws (see 9 below). And it is easier to bargain for large groups of workers. Still, the people who benefit from such large-scale bargaining in a country like Germany are free not to pay—and many don't. So what? Many do—up to 20 percent of the workers in the country. Yet collective bargaining covers more than 50 percent of workers.

So, what do we do about the free riders? Let them ride.

Yes, I worry it won't work here. I don't propose to tear down the existing compulsory dues structure all at once. After all, I have to make a living representing unions. But I think ultimately there is no alternative, in a culture so radically individualistic, but to opt for a voluntary model, whether we have European-type labor laws in place or not.

Otherwise, if it is not voluntary, as it is in social democratic Europe, it is hard to see why Americans would vote in yet another institution they cannot influence democratically. Albert Hirschman, the great Princeton economist, contends that to be accountable, institutions have to offer either "voice" or "exit." That is, people either need to really run the institution or to have an easy way out. Organized labor offers neither. That's why people distrust it.

I'd prefer to increase voice, to let the rank and file rule. But it's still impossible to get real union democracy. So the only way to do it seems to be the European way, to let people opt out and make membership voluntary. If that happens, unions here will behave like socialist-type unions in Europe, constantly trying to market themselves and please the members so they will keep paying dues.

People in this country are desperate for a labor movement. They are waiting for a Democratic Party to give them one they can control.



Put in a usury cap of 16 percent.

Again, aside from doing something for our base, it meets the other three FDR-type rules.

First, it's simple. Unlike the Dodd-Frank Act, this is easy to explain.

Second, it's universal—who can live without a Visa or MasterCard?

Third, it fits into a bigger plan—to shrink the big returns of a financial sector that's drained so much of the investment

that used to go into the “real economy.” After all, our plan has to be to make the country globally competitive, to bring down the trade deficit. And we can’t do that until we put limits on the returns of a financial sector that is in danger of sucking up all the invested capital that used to go into manufacturing.

Well, at any rate, it’s simple.



Set up small government banks like the German Sparkasse.

Ironically, in this time of bailouts, the failure of so many small banks has reduced the lending the country needs. In Illinois alone, thirty-seven banks have failed since the Wall Street crack-up. The big ones like Citibank, Bank of America and JPMorgan Chase are not just “too big to fail” but too big to lend.

How to fix that?

Set up small, government-run banks all over the country, like the little Sparkasse banks one sees all over Germany.

It would do something for our base. It’s simple to understand. It fits into a plan—to make the country more competitive so we can bring down the trade deficit. In Germany the Sparkasse banks are especially designed to help small manufacturers compete—the kind of small but high-value-added firms that the big banks like Deutsche Bank ignore but that play an important role in racking up a favorable trade balance for Germany.

And if all that is too abstract, think about this: the Sparkasse hand out credit cards with low interest rates.

Isn’t that the ultimate “public option”? A government credit card, at a lower than Bank of America rate.

Yes, it’s simple. It’s universal—everyone can use a credit card. And it adds up to a plan, to create a fair and just economy that can lift the middle class by increasing sales abroad.



Give everyone the right to six days of vacation—six consecutive paid working days.

Why six consecutive days? Well, we need five so we can connect the two weekends. And we need a sixth so we have something to trade away in the Senate.

I’m kidding. Let them filibuster. What could be better for the Democrats?

It does something for our base. It’s simple. And it fits into a plan, to make us more competitive.

If we had more vacation time, as the Europeans have, we might even visit and get to know these countries we have to compete with. If we had time off to go around the world, we might be more competitive.



Let employees sue corporate officers for breach of fiduciary duty to the corporation.

Under federal law, directors of our corporations owe a duty of “loyalty, care, diligence and prudence”—they have to pursue not their own interest but the best interest of their firms.

But in fact, they loot them.

And the firms go belly up and workers end up on the streets. We become less competitive.

As officers and directors loot our companies, we have fewer stockholders willing to stop them. With the rise of mutual funds and fund managers who don’t seem to care, the old model of corporate governance is broken.

If stockholders do nothing, unions don’t even exist. Our corporate boards are self-perpetuating. Directors keep re-nominating themselves with no real check or balance.

Yes, the Dodd-Frank Act gives mutual funds a shot at electing an occasional outside director. But even if—a big if—there is a lonely dissenter on a board, that won’t fix the model or do much for workers.

It’s this broken model that has hurt us so badly in competing with Germany and China, the two biggest exporters in the world. The German model has “co-determination,” with workers making up half the board. The Chinese model is even simpler: over there, Big Brother is either directly or indirectly in charge; if a Gordon Gekko pops up there, he’s taken out and shot.

In Germany, even a corporate rock star like Josef Ackermann—who pays out a relatively small bonus to a fellow officer—can be prosecuted for pillaging the firm.

If we can’t do what the Germans and Chinese do, what can we do to stop the looting of our corporations?

Let workers—not stockholders but the people who get the W-2s, even the janitors—have the right to sue officers who loot the firm. Right now, only stockholders can sue; and the fund managers don’t care. But the people with the paychecks are out on the street. Now I admit, the threat of a lawsuit, even a class action one, is not as good as the checks that the Germans and Chinese use. But why not bring a little folk justice to American capitalism? People are entitled to a bit of revenge.

So it does something for our base—it puts a weapon in the hands of some who are starting their second year of unemployment. It’s simple. It’s available to everyone, postgrad or janitor. And it’s part of a plan—to make the country more competitive by making managers pay if they try to loot the firm.

And by the way, this may open up a check on corporate contributions too. Right now, the Democrats are flummoxed about *Citizens United v. FEC*. As the Court ruled 5 to 4, corporations have a First Amendment right to dump money from the corporate treasury directly into the pockets of the candidates. But the Supreme Court did not change the old legal fiduciary duty—in place since Queen Elizabeth I—that in effect requires managers to use money only for “legitimate” corporate purposes, the ones that are set out in the articles of incorporation.

How does buying off a politician serve any legitimate purpose set out in these corporate articles?

Consider the litigation if workers had the right to sue for each use of corporate money that does not serve a “legitimate” corporate purpose, one that is at least set out in the articles of incorporation. Every time BP gave cash to a politician, a guy out on the oil rig could sue Tony Hayward directly, to get his own money back.

“Oh, but the suits may not succeed.”

Maybe, or maybe not—but I would not want to be a direc-

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tor defending any of the suits. And whether the money served my own or a corporate interest would make for a nice seven-hour deposition.

Even to put them under oath would give some pleasure to our base.



Pass a College Bill of Rights.

It would replace the GI Bill of Rights. If we can't get free college, at least let's make college more accountable. Why Race to the Top so that colleges can soak these kids and let them drop out? Our colleges are happy to take the money and dump the kids of working families after one or two years—deeper in debt, worse off than ever.

What rights should these kids and their parents have?

Make colleges advertise dropout rates.

Make colleges tell which courses actually “work,” i.e., help students improve some verbal or other skill.

Make them have outside auditors to prepare reports on this and make such reports public.

Create a kind of Federal Trade Commission to go after colleges and universities that take large sums of tuition but fail to have the overwhelming if not exclusive purpose of ensuring that these students, deep in debt, get a degree. One can define “unfair” or “deceptive” trade practices in this part of our bloated not-for-profit economy just as in any other. While one might not let students and parents sue directly, they could at least file for individual and “class-type” relief with this FTC.

But above all it's time for Barack Obama to tell the country we don't need everyone to go to college. After all, only 27 percent of adults have a bachelor's degree, and there are not enough jobs for them. The only way for the Democrats to stay in power is to stop demoralizing our base and tell people we will create an economy in which a high school degree will mean something.



End the filibuster.

Or else, as to all the rest, there really is no point.



Get the country out of debt.

Finally, we have to take back the GOP's big issue, the federal debt. Indeed, for every kind of debt—government, consumer, trade—the Democrats have to be the party that gets the country out of debt. That's the only way to bring back a fair and just economy that lifts the middle class. As debt piles up, even our base is freaking out. Deep down, people grasp that America got into this mess with too much private debt. “Hey, if we're all trying to get our own debt down, how does it make sense for the government to run it up?”

“Oh,” some of us will say. “These poor unenlightened ones—they don't understand Keynes.” Maybe we don't understand Keynes. Keynes would never have happily urged a serious debtor country to go deeper into debt. This is not

your great-grandfather's Great Depression. In 1936 Roosevelt could and should have gone into debt—but didn't. We were the biggest creditor country in the world. In World War II we ran up a colossal debt—but it was a debt to ourselves. We baby boomer kids never even noticed. That's why Keynes was so relaxed in 1936 about our going into debt. But otherwise Keynes spent much of his life trying to get debtor countries out of debt—Germany, his own Britain after the war. If one looks at his career, it is clear that Keynes never told a debtor country to go deeper into debt.

As he would point out, much of the debt we pile up in Washington has little or nothing to do with putting people back to work. Much of it is just to balance the books. Because we buy more than we sell, we have a trade deficit. So the books have to balance, right? Someone has to make up the difference. Under Bush we had consumers go into debt to do it. But they're tapped out. So now Washington has to go into debt instead.

But at at some point even Washington is tapped out. What happens then?

We turn back to consumers: “Hey, we're done going into debt. Now it's your turn to go into debt.”

No wonder our base freaks out—there isn't any plan to get us out of debt.

When we have a big trade deficit, the feds can't run up a debt just to re-employ Americans. As long as we've so much trade debt, we have to figure that a distressing amount of any stimulus will go ultimately to re-employ the workers in China, Brazil, Japan and even Europe, who fill the gap between the “demand” we pump up and what we actually “supply.” When we have a big trade deficit, it means that the more we prime the pump, the more we drain out this distressing amount of our national wealth.

And why else did the stimulus run out of steam?

It was probably not big enough, but an even bigger one might have run out of steam. The bigger the trade debt, the less punch there is in running up a deficit. You can't just blame the GOP for cutting the stimulus down.

What's more, on this debt to pump up foreign “supply” we also have to pay out interest to foreigners. The deeper in debt we go, the more likely we are to end up in the clutches of foreign creditors. Don't believe me? The time may come on the left that we'll miss the days when we could rail at Goldman Sachs instead of the IMF.

Yes, in ten or so years the renminbi or even the euro (thanks to Germany) could replace the dollar as the world currency in which we denominate our debt, and our fate will be up to central bankers in foreign countries.

This is no joke: a Babylonian-type captivity for our country is but a presidential term or two away.

What to do? Well, the first duty of a Democrat is to defend the country. We have to win our independence back. The president should give a wartime talk: how over the years, president after president has compromised the sovereignty of our country. And the big reason this happened is that we have too much debt—consumer debt, federal debt, trade debt—because we can't pay our way in the world.

For years, the economic advisers at Harvard et al. told their student presidential advisers-to-be, "The trade deficit doesn't matter."

Well, it does matter. We don't have the same freedom of maneuver in the world.

How do we get it back?

Items 1 through 9 above are all parts of a bigger plan to get us out of debt, every kind of debt. We have to bring back exports, so consumers and Washington don't have to keep coming up with the cash to pay for the trade deficit. That's the "plan." We have to punish investment in the financial sector—if it can even be called true investment at all, and not speculation or a way of holding on to savings, as Keynes once argued.

And we have to reward investment in manufacturing by lowering labor costs in what is left of our globally competitive industry. Yes, along with the stick we need a carrot—to increase the manufacturer's profit margin by taking over non-wage labor costs.

So, for example, we should push for Medicare at 55 to remove that burden on global companies, as we did when we lifted retiree healthcare for Chrysler and GM. (Yes, it makes us more competitive globally, and it's all legal under the World Trade Organization.) Likewise, while we should limit the deductibility of any debt for leveraged buyouts or flipping companies, we should keep it for investment in tangible manufacturing-based production. We should lower labor

costs not by lowering wages—goodness no, for that would be a disaster in the Keynesian or any other sense—but by having the government (yes, taxpayers) assume the nonwage healthcare and other costs—the only way to send a signal to investors that they had better get out of financial speculation and into manufacturing.

As Keynes would tell us, play on their psychology. Let investors know the "water is friendly"—not by penny-ante things but the big stuff. Yes, we on the left should even propose steep cuts in corporate taxes in manufacturing and offsetting them with higher taxes on financial firms, to give an even bigger Keynesian-type shock to get investment in manufacturing.

And we need a new corporate model—which gives human capital at least some modest check, as in Germany, over the allocation of financial capital.

That's the plan—to sell more abroad so we can all get out of debt.

From now on, this country has to be lean, mean and stripped for global competition.

And if we, the great-grandchildren of the New Deal, can bring all these things to pass, then FDR will smile upon us and say, "At last, children, you've done something for your base." Then our base will be glad to let us take on other things—perhaps even, before it's too late, to dial down global warming.

But we have to be in power. So if we want to save the planet, we better save the country first. ■

Rand Paul's Kentucky Derby

The Tea Party favorite is in a race to stitch together a statewide Republican coalition.

by DAN BISCHOFF

Fancy Farm, Kentucky

I spent two weeks in my home state this summer trying to figure out how Rand Paul could overturn every imaginable convention of a populist Kentucky politician yet still lead the race for senator. After all, Paul rarely smiles, he often seems to be talking to himself when he gives a speech and he almost never back-slaps another pol or shmoozes with regular voters. And Paul doesn't praise Kentucky or speak of its special place in American life. Kentuckians put a certain effort into believing their own kitsch—the derby, the bluegrass, the big blue moons—but Rand seems strangely indifferent to all that. As the *Lexington Herald-Leader* recently bemoaned, "A person who has 'lived' in Kentucky for 17 years might know how 'Bloody Harlan' [the county where the United Mine Workers fought



TIM ROBINSON

a war with strikebreakers in 1932] got its name and that 'The Dukes of Hazzard' was set in the fictional Hazzard (two Z's) County, Georgia, not the Kentucky city of Hazard (one Z)."

Even if the 47-year-old Paul is not quite a carpetbagger—he moved to Bowling Green in 1993 and married Kelley Ashby, from nearby Russellville, soon after—there's little doubt that he's an insurgent. In the primary he beat lawyer and banking heir Trey Grayson, the handpicked protégé of Kentucky's longest-serving senator, minority

leader Mitch McConnell, with more than 61 percent of the vote, largely thanks to his full-throated opposition to the bank bailouts McConnell helped engineer. Paul's best-known TV ad in the primary, "Machine," showed a computer-generated Capitol building putting out huge, pincer-armed tentacles that plunge into corporate logos like AIG's and slammed Grayson's acceptance of contributions from bailed-out firms.

Paul's general election opponent is Attorney General Jack

Dan Bischoff, born and raised in Louisville, is the art critic for the Star-Ledger and a former national political editor for the Village Voice.

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Professor William Kloss is an independent lecturer for the Smithsonian Institution's seminar and travel program. A noted scholar and art historian, he has been a featured lecturer for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and The Art Institute of Chicago, and a guest faculty lecturer at Sotheby's Institute.

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Conway, 41, a big, handsome, self-financed and well-connected political insider who is often described as a young politician from central casting. In contrast to Paul, Conway, who co-owns Stately Victor, the thoroughbred that placed eighth in last year's Kentucky Derby, often seems to want to do everything by the book: he shakes hands, smiles like he's visiting the orthodontist and pays court to every county kingpin he can find—yet without quite erasing his natural air of nervous arrogance.

The race has scrambled the politics of the two parties. Conway says he would have voted for the Iraq War, while Paul says he would have voted against it; Conway supports the Patriot Act, while Paul has criticized it as an “overreach”; Conway crusades against marijuana, calling it a “gateway drug,” while Paul has said that ten- and twenty-year sentences for possession are too harsh—a mildly countercultural stance that was only highlighted by a *GQ* article depicting the college-age Rand as a pot-smoking, girl-hazing, Christian-mocking devotee of the “Aqua Buddha.” Worst of all, Conway says he would gladly extend the Bush tax cuts for the very rich for “five,

Paul won the primary by running against the bailout, but now Kentucky's GOP wants to come together and run on God, gays and guns.

eight, maybe ten” years—a position thoroughly in sync with Paul's anti-tax crusade.

It's tempting to tag Paul as some kind of three-legged dog called a “libertarian” who will lead a Tea Party-infused revival of the GOP by replacing evangelical fundamentalism with free-market fundamentalism. But that doesn't quite ring true. For one thing, to win the Senate seat Paul will need the support of Kentucky's Republican elite and the party's evangelical base. Since winning the primary in May, Paul has thrown himself on McConnell like a penitent on the altar. Paul took the minority leader's advice and stiff-armed all local and national press (except Fox News), and has struggled to stay in step on rabble-rousing issues like the “Ground Zero mosque.” And after some hemming and hawing, Rand has said that if elected, he will vote for McConnell as leader.

So which kind of Republican is Rand Paul really? Or perhaps the answer to that question is another: What kind of Republican has a future in Kentucky—or anywhere?

The first time I saw Rand Paul speak to an all-Republican audience was the Friday night before the Fancy Farm church picnic, the traditional opening of Kentucky's general election season. Paul was to appear before about 150 people at the sixth annual GOP fundraising dinner in the Calvert City Community Center, near Paducah; he would be the *pièce de résistance* of a night of speeches by Republican candidates for offices ranging from county commissioner to governor. While we waited for the speeches to begin, I sat at a folding table with Phil Moffett, a Louisville businessman and gubernatorial hopeful, eating ham sand-

wiches and baked beans, along with six or seven women.

Some were newcomers who had never been politically active before; others were old-line GOP, not so different from my mom, who left the Dems for Richard Nixon. You could spot the strain. When conversation about the time Barney Fife tried to make himself taller by pulling on his chin with a noose looped over a coat hook led naturally to talk of “chiropractic,” and one of the younger women offered that she had been thrown from a truck during a “domestic violence incident,” several of the older ladies seemed to close a third eyelid. Moffett, who pioneered a program to give religious school scholarships to disadvantaged kids in the public system, excused himself and left.

Like the Tea Party itself, these folks know what they're against—it's what they are for that seems to be shifting. When I noticed that Paul and his staff (including the only black person in the room) had quietly taken their seats at their own table, I asked one of the newly minted Republicans seated next to me if Rand was the reason she was here, and she surprised me. “Not really. We're here tonight to hear Lynn Bechler [candidate for 4th District State Representative], who we just love. But we got involved because, you know, you just have to, what with all that's goin' on in Washington. We have to save America.”

The speakers before Paul all worked to soothe the stitching left from the last time the party reached out, in the 1990s, when evangelical Christians seized the grassroots—a transformation managed in large part by McConnell, beginning in 1984. Then as now, registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans in Kentucky by two to one, and most state and local offices were held by Dems. But McConnell started turning the state's Congressional delegation red with his first Senate race, against Walter “Dee” Huddleston, winning on the strength of a funny ad attacking the incumbent's attendance record by showing a farmer in overalls trailing two bloodhounds asking, “Where's Dee?” Roger Ailes, now chief of Fox News, produced the spot, and McConnell became the first Republican sent to the Senate from Kentucky since 1968.

But it was very close, just four-tenths of a point. By 1990, when popular Louisville Mayor Harvey Sloane challenged for the seat, McConnell had the Christians on board. “I had the editorial support of the *Courier-Journal* and strong support among Democrats in the cities,” says Sloane, a doctor who now runs the Eurasian Medical Education Program, which helps deliver medical care to patients with HIV and other diseases in Russia. “But when I went out into the state I found Mitch had wired all the churches together. There was nothing I could do.”

McConnell was supposed to get this network behind Grayson's bid for the GOP nomination, but Paul's ability to talk about economic unfairness gave him the edge. But now, in the general, he finds himself relying on the same base. When the top Republican in Frankfort, State Senate leader David Williams, introduces Paul by saying, “Government should serve the people the way we worship God, at the foot of the cross,” everybody applauds like he's praising the sun for shining.

But Rand Paul doesn't genuflect to his audiences, any more than he does at the foot of the cross. Paul starts out his speech

quoting Emily Dickinson and T.S. Eliot and then moves on to Abe Lincoln. He does not so much as paraphrase God until the very end, when he asks His blessing on America. He denounces taxes, but he also doubles down on his call for agriculture cuts (in a state that depends on \$250 million annually in federal farm supports), because we've "got to look at everything." He wonders darkly about the "enumerated powers" allowed Congress by the Constitution, complains about Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid and says all Congress members should be required to read every sentence in every bill before they vote on it. To no one's surprise, he lambastes the bailouts, which "reward inefficient and corrupt management" and "threaten...to destroy our US dollar." Though the speech is entirely secular in theme and given in a professorial, matter-of-fact tone, a man in the back row keeps yelling, "That's right!" and "Tell it!"

I was impressed—who doesn't think somebody ought to be punished for those damn bailouts? Paul gave the speech without notes, calmly, almost as if he did not see his audience. He's like a dad who's scariest when he talks softly—Paul's rhetoric blows on the cold ember of an anger bitterly remembered.

The problem with being angry about those bailouts is, of course, that every one was carried through the Senate by McConnell. However much the issue worked for Rand in the past, now Kentucky's Republican Party wants to come together and run on God, gays and guns—so much so that they sometimes seemed not to hear what they were applauding. Joe Gerth, the political writer for the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, told me he once quoted Paul verbatim saying he was personally opposed to abortion but wasn't sure it should be made entirely illegal. In turn Gerth got dozens of e-mails asking why he was "misrepresenting" Paul: every angry respondent "knew" Paul was categorically opposed to abortion.

During the primary, Rand Paul was calling on sinners to repent, or as he puts it, "fighting for the soul of the Republican Party." But where will he find the Kentucky Republicans he needs in the general if his solution is to blame their leader's vision and to bring home less from Washington in hard times?

Kentucky politics has forever been divided between the three cities (Louisville, Lexington and Covington, a suburb of Cincinnati) and everywhere else. In all the early polls, Jack Conway leads Rand Paul only in Lexington and his hometown, Louisville (though he comes close in the coal-mining eastern mountains). Everywhere else is Republican.

But the real estate that matters most to Paul's campaign is neither big city nor rural; it's in between—the outer suburbs, those wide bands of once-cheap farmland strung together by six-lane "service roads" running parallel to strip malls dotted with Applebee's, Anne Taylor outlets and GameStops, here and there punctuated by subdivision entrances. Bowling Green is ringed by a particularly dense belt of exurbs; Hurstbourne Lane, which runs by Conway's Louisville headquarters, is another such strip. These places are filled with people who have fled the old dichotomies between city and country for what is now an economically

uneasy compromise. A recent report in the *Courier-Journal* identified a half-dozen area developments that were facing millions of dollars in foreclosure suits; some lots that were worth \$82,000 a couple of years ago are now worth half that.

There are row houses and '60s-style ranch houses with backyards but also hundreds of multiacre lots that are not quite farms but don't have neighbors, either. These subdivisions are energy sinkholes—Lexington metro, for example, has the worst carbon footprint per capita of any US city. There are no general-interest newspapers out there, no museums, not even many movie theaters—that's what big-screen TVs are for. Yet this is where most consumer activity takes place and where most political fundraising is done. The people who live in such developments (hardly unique to Kentucky, of course) hail not so much from this or that state as from SimCity, or maybe World of Warcraft.

Take Matt Grant, 24, who lives in Okolona, a southern suburb of Louisville out toward Fort Knox. Grant works for the Geek Squad at Best Buy, where he first heard about Paul from his co-workers. He doesn't read newspapers or watch much cable TV: it was Rand Paul's Facebook page that made him a convert.

There are 18,000 unionized coal miners in Kentucky, but Southeast Christian, a Pentecostal megachurch, has 19,000 members alone.

"The page doesn't just give me information about the campaign," Grant says. "It also connects me to other people who feel similarly to myself.... But basically, I like the message about self-reliance. The way he says over and over that the government ought to be a referee, but never a participant, in the economy.... I think that's what this country is all about."

Matt went to Evangel Christian School, a K-12 school run by the Evangel World Prayer Center, a Pentecostal megachurch. No matter what critics say about these huge churches, you have to give them this: unlike government programs, higher education, paid media or any other sector of the culture (except the Internet and, well, shopping itself), megachurches have at least met the scale of contemporary life. America has twice as many citizens as it did fifty years ago, yet still only one Harvard; but today, most towns of any size have a megachurch with at least one more space in its parking lot for you.

But hard times have hit religion, too. Southeast Christian, the largest Louisville megachurch, canceled its Easter pageant this year to save money. Many have begun debt-counseling programs for their congregants. Yet they still preach a kind of Republicanism that continues to shape Kentucky politics.

Let's put this into context. Coal mining, for example, is one of Kentucky's biggest industries, and the decision by a coalition of mine owners, under *Citizens United* rules, to fund Paul's campaign and work against Conway made big news in July. (Rand reciprocated, saying of mountaintop removal, "We're not talking about Mt. Everest. We're talking about these little knobby hills that are everywhere out here.") Coal miners are icons of the Kentucky way of life, especially in places like Harlan County,

where the hot new TV series *Justified* is set. There are 18,000 unionized coal miners in Kentucky.

But Southeast Christian alone has 19,000 members. And Matt Grant is no coal miner. His dream would be moving to Minnesota to work at Best Buy's corporate headquarters. He studies nights to get his MBA at the University of Louisville, and lumps Bush and Obama together for overplaying "failed government solutions."

He adds a last thought. "It's probably good that someone from Kentucky is in the leadership, but Mitch McConnell has been there an awful long time."

It was this anti-establishment mood that the national press expected to see at the 130th annual Fancy Farm picnic at St. Jerome Catholic Church. Fancy Farm is the political version of a high school basketball game, where the speaker throws red meat (hopefully funny red meat) while outshouting his hecklers, as we imagine William Jennings Bryan once did. Alben Barkley, a Kentucky legend and Harry Truman's veep from 1949 to 1953, put Fancy Farm on the map in the '30s by using the picnic to debate the New Deal. Few other states were quite so powerfully transformed by FDR's response to the Great Depression as Kentucky was, and for decades Fancy Farm was thought to be a Democratic institution where unionized workers—holding jobs created by the Tennessee Valley Authority's largest project, the Kentucky Lakes, not twenty minutes away from Fancy Farm—came to shout down Republicans.

This year the press was anticipating a Tea Party auto-da-fé, the Rand Paul crazies on the march. With a low black population (just 7 percent), Kentucky would put America's white tribe on display. How mad were they?

What they saw was something else. All the trimmings were as expected: a sunny day for barbecue and fried chicken, followed by homemade desserts; Abe Lincoln and George Washington impersonators, joined by a guy wearing skins and carrying a big plastic club labeled "NeanderPaul." Conway folks filled the floor before the podium and most of the bleachers to its left, Republicans the bleachers on the right, with a small but definite advantage in numbers going to the Dems. Most glaring in its absence was Paul's vaunted army of pissed-off Tea Partiers. I counted one pro-Tea Party sign and at least three against (CRACK OPEN THE TEA PARTY, IT'S FULL OF NUTS).

The Tea Partiers may simply have no foothold in this corner of Kentucky, but it's more likely that the Shirley Sherrod/NAACP video-clip scam, which had been exposed a few weeks before the picnic, withered their self-confidence. Certainly Paul, with his neatly groomed black aide, was sending no Andrew Breitbart-type signals. The night before at Calvert City, a couple of newly active Republicans told me they had named their upcoming mid-August demonstration in nearby Marion the Grassroots Conservative Rally because they did not "want to be associated" with the Tea Party. One said, "You know what the media is saying about them, making them appear to be..." and she mouthed the word "racist."

Moreover, we're not talking about a youth movement here. Most of the Paulites at Fancy Farm were like Rich and Rosie, a

middle-aged radiologist and his wife, who moved from Louisville to Bowling Green thirty years ago, where they befriended Paul. They were here to support their guy, whom they spoke of with real affection; but it was 94 degrees in the shade, and their days of yelling like Wildcat fans were long past.

So when McConnell got booed all through his speech (worse than any other speaker), maybe it was the heat that delivered only flagging support from his side. Not that Mitch seemed bothered by that—keeping a tight little smile, he nodded to the cheers that his assaults on "Obama, Pelosi and Reid" generated and quickly sat down. Then Jack Conway, who'd won the toss, actually delivered the sort of speech expected of these events, getting a call-and-response rhythm going based on Rand Paul's defense of BP, ending with the call, "What did Mitch McConnell and the Republican Party say when Rand Paul won the primary?" "Accidents happen!"

Finally, Paul took the podium. After his performance the night before, you might have expected a laconic putdown of Conway's bellowed speech—but no. Paul started with a count of the pages in the federal tax code. He read his speech like it was a telegram, one sent from someplace far out of state and filled with words like "exponentially." When it was over, he skedaddled off the stage and into his waiting SUV without so much as a word to a single picnicker, trailing a desperate wake of reporters who couldn't catch his eye either.

To add insult to injury, three days later Paul went on Sean Hannity's radio show to suggest that Fancy Farm was a "wild picnic" where he and other politicians were afraid someone might "throw beer on us"—even though St. Jerome Catholic Church forbids alcohol and the county is dry. Paul apologized within hours, but his snub was statewide news.

But even if Rand were to personally insult every Kentuckian he meets every day until election day, it may not make any difference at all here. That's how poisoned the chalice George Bush handed to Obama was: with the bank bailout, the government put itself on the side of the people who are foreclosing on all the homes down here, and anybody on that side can go to hell. I have seen the way people put their hands in their pockets and look away when I lamely tell them I was born down here but moved to New York City thirty years ago. Strangling me would be impolite. "You were bailed out then, wasn't you?" a retired guard from the Eddyville State Prison said to me at Fancy Farm. "How nice for y'all."

It's not as if Kentuckians don't know what Washington can do—you can see the Kentucky Lakes from outer space, for God's sake. The first question for any Democrat has to be, Why has the government done so little about unemployment and restoring consumer confidence? Maybe Jack Conway can answer that better in the next two months than my brief experience of him on the stump showed. Or, as Conway evidently hopes, maybe Rand will order a Jack Daniel's and call it bourbon, or set fire to the Daniel Boone National Forest.

If not, it's like the Republican primary never ended, in a way. There are still two Republicans fighting it out: one young, native-born, rich and (this time) a handsome lawyer, and one a quirky outsider pushing economic fundamentalism. We know how that race turned out the first time. ■

It's Not the Party—It's the Policies

Inequality has risen under Republicans *and* Democrats when they've embraced neoliberalism.

by ROBERT POLLIN

The economy is stuck in a ditch, with even Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke voicing serious concerns about a double-dip recession. Despite this, the focus of economic policy debates in Washington is drifting dangerously away from fighting mass unemployment and Wall Street hyper-speculation in favor of cutting social spending to reduce the federal deficit. State and local governments throughout the country are imposing major cuts in healthcare, education and social services. This is while the official unemployment rate is 9.6 percent, but a more accurate measure would be close to 20 percent. Also, a high proportion of workers who have been rehired after having been laid off during the recession are taking big pay cuts.

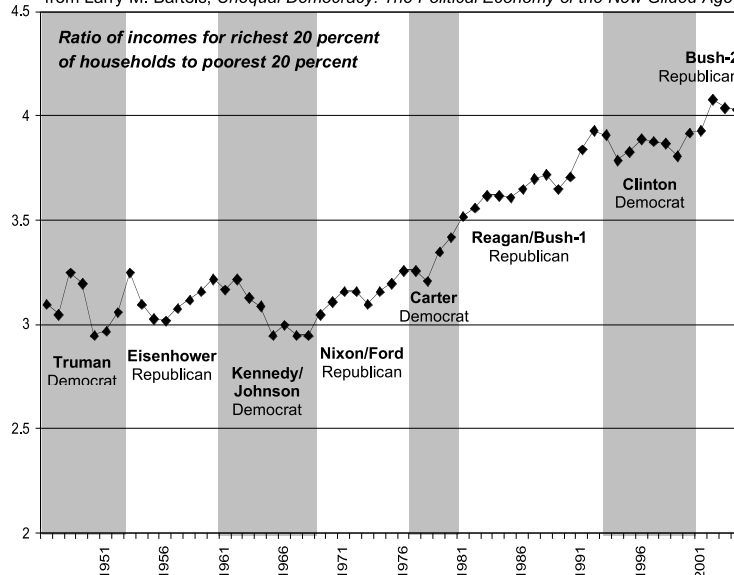
All these trends will contribute to worsening the economy's long-term pattern of sharply rising inequality. Rising inequality, in turn, increases the difficulties of mounting a sustainable recovery. The logic is simple. When the overall amount of income produced in an economy is shared broadly, more people have money in their pockets to spend, which bolsters demand in the markets and encourages private businesses to invest more. This leads to expanding employment opportunities, which then strengthens market demand further. Conversely, when an excessive share of an economy's overall income is concentrated at the top, then more money gets channeled into the Wall Street casino. This sets the stage for the type of financial collapse we experienced in 2008-09.

Just how severe has been the rise in inequality? For starters, the share of total personal income going to the richest 1 percent of earners more than doubled between the late 1950s and 2005, from 10.2 to 21.8 percent. Even more extraordinary, the share received by the richest one out of 1,000 households—the top 0.1 percent—more than tripled over this same period, from 3.2 to 10.9 percent.

Of course, capitalist economies are not designed to create equality. They are designed to reward winners in marketplace competition and correspondingly punish losers. This is supposed to be the motor force that drives capitalist economies to produce ever more products and ever greater riches, even if it also generates inequality. But recognizing this central fact about capitalism in general does not explain why US capitalism circa 2010 is producing a much greater

Rising Income Inequality in the United States

from Larry M. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*



level of inequality than during the 1950s and '60s.

The recent book *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, by distinguished Princeton political scientist Larry Bartels, provides important perspectives on the situation. It does so through the impressive evidence and arguments he assembles but equally through the single overarching consideration that he neglects, even while his data lead us right to this point.

Debates have been raging for decades without resolution about the major causes of rising American inequality. Bartels boldly tosses almost all of this literature aside and offers instead his own simple explanation: that the Democratic Party overall supports greater equality and the Republican Party supports greater inequality. Bartels's broad explanation for the rise in inequality since the 1960s is thus that Republicans have dominated politics over that period, especially by maintaining control of the White House for most of that time.

With Obama in the White House for eighteen months now, and the Democrats holding big majorities in both Houses of Congress, Bartels's model would suggest that egalitarianism should be on the march. But this has not yet happened. Prospects for the future are at best mixed, with the recession continuing, the healthcare and financial regulation bills having conceded far too much to big business and no action at all having been taken to strengthen workers' rights to organize and join unions.

The evidence Bartels presents in *Unequal Democracy* goes far in explaining this lack of progress, even though Bartels himself misses the connection. Most telling is a figure in the

Robert Pollin is a professor of economics and co-director of the Political Economy Research Institute (PERI) at the University of Massachusetts. One of his most recent books (co-written) is *A Measure of Fairness: The Economics of Living Wages and Minimum Wages in the United States*.

book that plots the rise of inequality under Democratic and Republican administrations from 1947 to 2005 [see figure on page 23]. The figure shows that overall inequality did not rise by the end of the Republican Eisenhower administration in 1960 relative to when Eisenhower took office in 1953. Moreover, inequality rose under the Democratic presidency of Jimmy Carter at roughly the same sharp rate as it had in the immediately preceding Republican administrations of Nixon and Ford.

Finally, considering Bill Clinton's Democratic presidential term overall, inequality did not fall at all relative to the historically high levels that were attained under Ronald Reagan and the first President Bush. In fact, this figure makes clear that the only period between 1947 and 2005 when America became significantly more equal was during the Kennedy/Johnson years.

Because Bartels overlooks this major historical pattern in his own data, he also neglects to observe the dramatic transformation in policy-setting circles undergirding it. This was the shift in policy-setting influence from an ascendant Keynesian social democratic framework to a dominant neoliberal framework, whose intellectual leaders included Milton Friedman and his colleagues from the University of Chicago economics department.

This shift occurred in the mid-1970s, during the high inflation years under Jimmy Carter. It was during the Carter

presidency that the movement toward deregulating business—including, in particular, global trade and financial markets—began gathering strong momentum. The most significant legislative action to deregulate US financial markets occurred during the Clinton presidency, when most of the remaining features of the 1930s-era Glass-Steagall financial regulatory system were repealed. Bartels is clearly aware of this shift in the broad policy landscape, writing, for example, "When Bill Clinton entered the White House in 1993, he apparently felt a good deal more constrained by the Federal Reserve Board and the bond markets than previous Democratic presidents had been."

The lesson is straightforward. Contrary to Bartels, electing Democrats to office will not by itself deliver a more equal society. This includes Democrats such as Barack Obama who openly profess a commitment to "spreading the wealth," as he did during his 2008 election-eve conversation with "Joe the Plumber." The fundamental challenge is, rather, to supplant the continued dominance of neoliberalism in setting the economic policy agenda with an up-to-date variant of a New Deal program. In addition to embracing environmental concerns at its forefront, this green New Deal would be an agenda that pushes the institutions of American capitalism to the limit in allowing democratic politics and egalitarian goals to gain ascendancy over the prerogatives of Wall Street and big business. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

erals that exist in limited quantities.

Given these natural limits, the only interim technology is nuclear. New generation nuclear plants are much smaller and safer than their predecessors and produce comparatively little waste. Combined with fuel recycling and safety and security measures, they will play an important role between now and when we can fulfill our energy needs with green sources. We can't expect hydrocarbon fuel use to be minimized until about 2050, after which nuclear can be phased out. This transition will take a lot of foresight and patience, which can be difficult to accept. But accept it we must.

C.J. MITCHELL, *chemical engineer*

BROOKTONTDALE, N.Y.

Your "Freedom From Oil" issue presents the conventional vision of a future clean-energy supply based on wind, solar and other technologies feeding a smart grid. But every product that is derived from oil or other fossil fuels can also be derived from some form of biomass. Biomass should be elevated to first priority among renewable energy sources, as it already provides the greatest quantities of clean

energy today, will likely provide the lion's share in the future, does not require new or exotic technologies and is the only way to replace fossil fuels. Policies supporting biomass energy, such as agricultural price supports and a carbon tax, could quickly inject new economic life into rural America and immediately reduce pollution by directly displacing fossil fuels.

ED DODGE

PITTSBURG, KANS.

I kicked the petroleum oil habit years ago. I have been using American-made synthetic lubricants in my automobiles for more than thirty years. Every jet and spacecraft in the universe uses synthetic lubricants. They are available nationwide and are a serious green solution to petroleum lubricants. I am a synthetic lubricants dealer, I sell them to friends and customers and I have registered others as dealers of synthetic lubricants, which can be used for all kinds of oil and grease applications. So, if readers are serious about kicking the oil habit, my e-mail address is ggarman@sunnetworks.net.

F. EUGENE GARMAN

Big Bad Book Dealers

CARLSBAD, CALIF.

Regarding Colin Robinson's excellent and accurate "The Trouble With Amazon" [Aug. 2/9], it should be noted that besides the unfair discount advantages Amazon receives from publishers, unlike independent bookstores, it is not required to charge sales tax.

ROBERT ARNOLD

HINESBURG, VT.

Colin Robinson's piece is excellent as far as it goes. But it suggests that Amazon's predatory behavior is out of the ordinary. It seems to me merely an instance of the extension of the "free market" to all areas of existence, one of the incidental consequences of which is the impoverishment and uniformization of what remains of our culture. Every country has its pathologies, but at least in France, with the 1982 Lang law prohibiting discounts on books of greater than 5 percent, the condition of independent booksellers is healthier than in the United States. Any such provision is, of course, unthinkable here.

GEORGE HOLOCH

Books & the Arts.



CARLOS DUARTE/REUTERS

Rigoberta Menchú, then running for the presidency of Guatemala, at the opening ceremony of the election campaign in Guatemala City, May 2, 2007

It Was Heaven That They Burned

by GREG GRANDIN

Dante's *Inferno* "is out"; *I, Rigoberta Menchú* "is in," the *Wall Street Journal* wrote, in late 1988, of Stanford University's decision to include third-world authors in its required curriculum. "Virgil, Cicero and Tacitus give way to Frantz Fanon," the paper said, concerned that Stanford's new reading list viewed "the West" not through the "evolution of such ideas as faith and justice, but through the prism of sexism, racism and the faults of its ruling classes." Herewith began the metamorphosis of a young and relatively obscure Guatemalan Mayan woman into something considerably more than a witness to genocide.

Since its publication in Ann Wright's English translation in 1984, Rigoberta Menchú Tum's memoir had been assigned with increasing frequency in university

courses in the United States and Europe. Historians taught it as a primary source documenting revolution and repression in Guatemala and elsewhere in Latin America, anthropologists as first-person ethnography and literary theorists as an example of *testimonio*, a genre distinct from traditional forms of autobiography. But Menchú's mention in the *Journal* thrust her further into the escalating culture wars, with conservatives holding her up as an example of the foibles of the multicultural left. "Undergraduates do not read about Rigoberta," wrote the American Enterprise Institute's Dinesh D'Souza in 1991, "because she has written a great and immortal book, or performed a great deed, or invented something useful. She simply happened to be in the right place and the right time."

The place was Guatemala's Western Highlands, inhabited by some 4 million people, the majority poor indigenous peasants living in remote, hardscrabble villages like Chimel, Menchú's hometown. The time

was the late 1970s, when the Guatemalan military was bringing to a climax a pacification campaign, the horror of which was matched only by historical memories of the Spanish conquest. By the time it was over, government forces had taken the lives of Menchú's parents, her two brothers and 200,000 other Guatemalans. And though this campaign may have been "unfortunate for her personal happiness," D'Souza said, it was "indispensable for her academic reputation," transforming Menchú into a fetish object onto which "minority students" could affirm their "victim status" and professors could project their "Marxist and feminist views onto South American Indian culture."

Then in 1992, on the 500-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Americas, Menchú was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and whatever ability she had up until that point to maintain the integrity of her particular story gave way to the burdens of representing the victims of imperialism everywhere. She was given the

Greg Grandin teaches at NYU and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His most recent book, *Fordlandia*, was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in history.

prize, the Nobel selection committee noted, not just for her work exposing the murder and mayhem committed by US allies in Guatemala but for serving as a “vivid symbol of peace and reconciliation” in a world still scarred by European colonialism.

It is safe to say that most who read her book did not interpret her tale as “an explicit indictment of the historical role of the West or Western institutions,” as D’Souza feared, but rather as a saga of individual resilience in the face of great hardship, much like Anne Frank’s diary. If anything, Menchú held out the possibility of redemption, as the Nobel committee suggested. Unlike Anne Frank, she survived. And following the end of the cold war, many intellectuals and policy-makers hoping to construct a *pax neoliberal* were willing to acknowledge that victory over the Soviet Union had entailed some moral compromises. Support of “widespread repression” was “wrong,” said President Bill Clinton in 1999, a “mistake” the “United States must not repeat.”

Yet as far as irreconcilables on the cultural and political right were concerned, the Peace Prize might as well have been given posthumously to Frantz Fanon or Che Guevara. Trapped as they are by the fallacy of consequent logic, where to admit A would mean accepting Z, those most hostile to Menchú believed that to acknowledge her legitimacy would indeed indict the whole of the West and all of its works. The attacks came fast after she won her Nobel, with detractors working hard to expose Menchú as an Indian with an agenda. They demanded that she “come clean” about her involvement with Guatemalan guerrillas, renounce her support of the Sandinistas in neighboring Nicaragua and denounce human rights violations in Cuba. D’Souza thought it suspicious that Menchú met her “feminist translator”—Elisabeth Burgos, once married to Che’s comrade Régis Debray—“in Paris, not a venue to which many of the Third World’s poor routinely travel,” and that her “rhetoric employs a socialist and Marxist vocabulary that does not sound typical of a Guatemalan peasant.”

What truly irked, though, was not the language but the details. “No details! Never bother me with details!” pleads the archbishop in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *The Devil and the Good Lord* (1951), hoping to be spared the specifics of a violent military suppression of a peasant revolt. Sartre’s sixteenth-century cleric knew what cold war triumphalists feared: “A victory described in detail is indistinguishable from a defeat.” Menchú provided too many details.

Rigoberta Menchú Tum was 23 years old when she arrived in Paris in January 1982, when she gave the interview that would produce her memoir. The worst of Guatemala’s civil war was yet to come. The roots of the crisis reached back to five years before Menchú was born, to the CIA’s 1954 overthrow of democratically elected Jacobo Arbenz. The agency objected to the fact that Arbenz had legalized a small communist party and implemented an extensive agrarian reform. Following the coup, Washington promised that it would turn Guatemala into a “showcase for democracy.” Instead, it created a laboratory of repression. After the costly Korean War, US policy-makers decided that the best way to confront

security forces killed or disappeared close to a thousand Social and Christian Democrats, trade unionists, university professors and students. By 1980 death squads were running rampant in Guatemala City and the countryside, and mutilated bodies piled up on the streets and in ravines.

In the indigenous highlands, violence against activists had been commonplace since the 1954 overthrow of Arbenz, and steadily increased through the ’60s and ’70s. Menchú’s brother, Petrocinio, was murdered in late 1979. Repression of Catholic priests and catechists reached such a pitch that the church shuttered its diocese in the department of El Quiché in 1980; the first of many assaults on Menchú’s village took place that year on Christmas Eve. The massacres started in 1981 and at first were not linked to a plan of stabilization or rule. Then in March 1982, shortly after Menchú’s Paris interview, a military coup in Guatemala brought an even more vicious, yet more competent, regime to power. In an effort to eliminate the insurgent threat without generating wider circles of radicalization, military analysts marked Mayan communities according to colors: “white” spared those thought to have no rebel influence; “pink” identified areas in which the insurgency had a limited presence—suspected guerrillas and their supporters were to be killed but the communities left standing; “red” gave no quarter—all were to be executed and villages destroyed. “One of the first things we did,” said an architect of this plan, “was draw up a document for the campaign with annexes and appendices. It was a complete job with planning down to the last detail.”

A subsequent investigation by the United Nations Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH)—a truth commission, for which I worked as a consultant—called this genocide. The CEH documented a total of 626 army massacres, most of which took place between early 1982 and 1983—that is, the period between Menchú’s interview and her book’s publication in French and Spanish. In a majority of cases, the commission found

evidence of multiple ferocious acts preceding, accompanying, and following the killing of the victims. The assassination of children, often by beating them against the wall or by throwing them alive into graves to be later crushed by the bodies of dead adults; amputation of limbs; impaling victims; pouring gasoline on people and burning them alive; extraction of organs; removal of fe-

Editor’s Note

A longer version of this essay will appear as the introduction to *Who Is Rigoberta Menchú?*, forthcoming from Verso in 2011. The essay was commissioned as the preface to a new edition of *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, but the essay was excluded from the volume when it appeared earlier this year. The author’s rights to *I, Rigoberta Menchú* are held by Elisabeth Burgos, who conducted most of the 1982 interviews in Paris that would serve as the basis of Menchú’s memoir. As rights-holder Burgos retains the right to veto any new editions; after reading the essay, she exercised her veto. She has not offered an explanation of her decision.

communism was not on the battlefield but by strengthening the “internal defense” of allied countries. Guatemala, now ruled by a pliant and venal regime, proved a perfect test case, as Washington supplied a steadily increasing infusion of military aid and training. US diplomats often signaled a desire to work with a “democratic left”—that is, a noncommunist left. But the most passionate defenders of democracy were likely to be found in the ranks of Washington’s opponents and singled out for execution by US-created and -funded security forces.

By the late 1970s, more than two decades after the overthrow of Arbenz, the Guatemalan government stood on the point of collapse. Repression against reformist politicians, a radicalized Catholic Church, indigenous activists and a revived labor and peasant movement swelled the ranks of a left-wing insurgency that, by the end of the decade, was operating in eighteen of Guatemala’s twenty-two departments. Between 1976 and 1980,

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tuses from pregnant women.... The military destroyed ceremonial sites, sacred places, and cultural symbols. Indigenous language and dress were repressed.... Legitimate authority of the communities was destroyed.

Massacres broke the agricultural cycle, leading to hunger and widespread deprivation as refugees hiding in the mountains and lowland jungle scavenged roots and wild plants to survive. A million and a half people, up to 80 percent of the population in some areas, were driven from their homes, with entire villages left abandoned.

This scorched-earth campaign was de-

In 1999 David Stoll charged that Menchú had distorted events depicted in her autobiography.

signed to cut off indigenous communities from the insurgency and break down the communal structures that military analysts identified as the seedbed of guerrilla support. This explains the exceptionally savage nature of the counterinsurgency, which, while constituting the most centralized and rationalized phase of the war, was executed on the ground with a racist frenzy. The point was not just to eliminate the guerrillas and their real and potential supporters but to colonize the indigenous spaces, symbols and social relations military strategists believed to be outside state control. Terror was made spectacle. Soldiers and their paramilitary allies raped women in front of husbands and children. Security forces singled out religious activists for murder and turned churches into torture chambers. "They say that the soldiers scorched earth," one survivor told me, "but it was heaven that they burned."

In *Rigoberta Menchú* cut through the shroud that surrounded this slaughter. The heartbreaking murders of Menchú's brother, father and mother mark key turning points in a powerful coming-of-age story in which the protagonist's progress as a politically aware person merges with the revolutionary momentum of society as a whole. Menchú presents her father's long struggle to defend their village's land against the predations of planters as typical of the dispossession suffered by Guatemala's peasants, and subtly melds indigenous rituals and beliefs to the ideals of liberation theology, a current in Catholicism that sought to

align itself with the poor. Having given her interview before the genocide, which turned the tide of the war in favor of the military, Menchú brings readers to the edge of the abyss. We now know that the revolution was doomed to fail, and there are hints throughout her book that Menchú knew it as well. By her story's end, she lingers timorously on the cusp of the looming apocalypse, which she tries to forestall by increasingly asserting the inevitability of the people's victory.

In one passage, Menchú recalls hiding in the capital before her flight to Mexico, sick with ulcers, unable to rise from bed for days at a time, finding consolation that she "wasn't the only orphan in Guatemala" and that her grief was the "grief of a whole people." For a moment, she is bearing the burdens of "all poor Guatemalans" not to predict triumph but to accept loss. Having unexpectedly reunited with her 12-year-old

sister, Menchú demands to know what kind of world could produce such misery: "How is it possible for our parents to be no longer with us?" Her anguish leads her to fantasize about succumbing to some unnamed "vice," a "depravity," so that she would no longer "have to think or bear life." Menchú would go on to escape Guatemala and achieve international recognition. Here, though, she glimpses the oblivion that was the fate of some war widows and orphans. The vices available to Mayan women were sex and drink, and starting in the late 1970s, indigenous prostitutes, refugees from decimated families, began to haunt the margins of Guatemala City's downtown, many still dressed in native *traje*. A more common fortune was to struggle on in solitude, trying to hold what was left of one's family together. Menchú's despair, however, is fleeting. "What has happened is a sign of victory," she reports her sister telling her; "a revolutionary isn't born out of something good" but of "wretchedness and bitterness." Having confirmed her commitment to the struggle, this triumphalism is obviously less propaganda than deflection, a way for Menchú to put off reckoning with incalculable loss and barely controlled rage. "We have to fight without measuring our suffering," her sister said.

In 1999 David Stoll, a professor of anthropology at Middlebury College who had spent many years researching the veracity of Menchú's story, published his findings, charging that the Nobel laureate exaggerated and otherwise dis-

torted some of the events chronicled in her autobiography. Many who knew Guatemala well thought Stoll's book, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, a strange exercise in compulsion in which the author repeatedly reaffirmed his admiration for Menchú but then drove himself to dispute even her offhanded comments. "What rankles," wrote journalist and novelist Francisco Goldman—who has spent many years peeling back the layers of the baroque conspiracy surrounding the 1998 execution of Guatemalan bishop Juan José Gerardi—"is the whiff of ideological obsession and zealotry, the odor of unfairness and meanness, the making of a mountain out of a molehill."

Two of Stoll's charges concerning Menchú's life do have merit. First, he documents that she received some education, contradicting a claim that her father refused to send her to school because he did not want her to lose her cultural identity. Second, Stoll presents evidence that Menchú falsely placed herself at the scene of her 16-year-old brother's murder. Petrocino Menchú was kidnapped by the military when his sister said he was, and was brought along with other captives to the town of Chajul, accused of being a guerrilla and murdered to intimidate the population. Menchú's account of the execution, Stoll believes, "can be considered factual." Except she did not witness it. As to Menchú's equally harrowing description of her mother's killing, Stoll grants that "Rigoberta's account is basically true."

The *New York Times* highlighted Stoll's accusations in a top-of-the-fold, front-page story, while publications high and low—*The New Republic*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Lingua Franca*, *Time*, the *New York Post*—weighed in. Some took the opportunity to commission lengthy meditations on the relationship of facts to memory in a preliterate, traumatized peasant society. Others simply swiped at the academic left, lumping Menchú with Edward Said, whose autobiography *Out of Place* was just then also coming under attack for allegedly obscuring some facts of his life while embroidering others. Conservatives, of course, seized on Stoll's accusations. David Horowitz called *I, Rigoberta Menchú* "a tissue of lies" and "one of the greatest hoaxes of the 20th century...virtually everything that Menchú has written is a lie." He took out ads in college papers, condemning Menchú as a "Marxist terrorist," denouncing professors who continued to teach her book and calling for the revocation of her Nobel.

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For his part, Stoll seemed caught off guard by a controversy that was quickly escaping his control, offering contradictory statements to explain the point of his research. His book dedicated a chapter to proving that Menchú could not have witnessed her brother's execution, yet he now said that "how one member or another of her family died" was a minor issue. Stoll confirmed the "essential factuality of Menchú's account of how her brother and mother died" yet complained to a reporter that she was "still displaying a lack of candor" in answering his charges. He distanced himself from the right, defending Menchú's status as a Nobel laureate, and flailed at

locked in a decades-long quarrel not with rich *Ladino* planters, as his daughter described, but with his wife's family (*Ladinos* are non-Mayan Guatemalans). In the years before his death, Vicente Menchú was evicted from his land, jailed and beaten, Stoll confirms, but those primarily responsible for his torment were his Mayan in-laws, the Tums. He also guesses that Vicente Menchú was not as politically active and astute as his daughter made him out to be, notwithstanding his involvement in peasant leagues, local development projects and the catechist movement. He speculates that Rigoberta Menchú, too, came to her "political consciousness" late, largely in reaction to the murders of her brother, father

and mother, and perhaps spent the time her family was being persecuted enjoying life at Catholic boarding schools. From these conjectures, Stoll makes what he considers his most important deduction: that

the Menchús stumbled into their alliance with the insurgents, and they did so not because they were determined to overthrow an intolerable social system but because they hoped to gain the upper hand against their peasant rivals. In so doing, they—and their neighbors—reaped the whirlwind.

Stoll complained that, amid all the scandal's noise, the larger point of his research was getting drowned out. But it was not. Right-wing activists, finely attuned to how A leads to Z, knew exactly what was at stake. They said it more shrilly, but they said more or less the same thing: "The fact is that there was no social ground for the armed insurrection that these Castroists tried to force," Horowitz wrote; ultimately "the source of the violence and ensuing misery that Rigoberta Menchú describes in her destructive little book is the left itself."

Conservatives recognized the value of Stoll's argument because it had been made before, at least as early as 1790, when Edmund Burke said France's old regime had been in the process of self-reformation before ideologues who read too much Rousseau derailed things. In fact, Stoll's position parallels, probably unwittingly, more recent revisionist arguments concerning the French Revolution. Since feudalism was already on the wane before 1789, revolutionary militancy did not advance liberalization but rather represented a ghastly *dérápée*, as François Furet put it, a slide into chaos. In later work, Furet revised his opinion, rejecting the contingent implications of the word *dérápée* to argue that the

"very idea of revolution" generated Jacobin terror. It is a position that runs to the core of contemporary debates concerning the causes of militancy, between those who see conflict as rooted in larger social relations, with violence resulting from the instigating intransigence of elites, and those who attribute terror to utopian ideological fervor. While the latter position has been used to explain events in Europe and the United States, such as the Holocaust, Stalinism and the New Left, it holds considerably less influence in the third world, where the relationship between repression, on the one hand, and colonialism, imperialism and capitalism, on the other, is hard to deny.

Thus the broad resonance, beyond anything having to do with Guatemala, of the Menchú controversy. Guatemala has long been recognized as one of the most exploited societies in a region defined by exploitation, a place where many Mayans were subject to what was in effect slavery well into the twentieth century. The role of the United States in terminating the first and still so far only government that tried to democratize the country has been so well documented that it has become the mainstream example of choice when one wants to illustrate the misuse of Washington's power abroad. It even forced a sitting president to apologize. The catastrophe that followed the 1954 coup had staggering human costs, resulting in one of the most savage wars in twentieth-century Latin America. So, if it could be demonstrated that political violence in northern Quiché—among the poorest of regions in the poorest of departments in the poorest of countries—was caused not by land dispossession, racism or aborted reform but by, as Stoll thinks, "middle-class radicals" entranced by the Cuban Revolution, then the whole of Latin American history would be up for grabs. And indeed, by the end of his book, Stoll has parlayed discrepancies in Menchú's story into a blanket indictment of the Latin American left throughout its cold war history, attributing the rise of death-squad dictatorships in Chile, Argentina and other countries in the 1970s to the "misguided belief in the moral purity of total rejection, of refusing to compromise with the system and seeking to overthrow it by force."

It is hard, though, to hang such a grand interpretation on the personal motives of one disputatious indigenous peasant and the imaginative license of his 23-year-old orphaned daughter. But Stoll does try, insist-

Stoll claimed not to want to discredit Menchú but to contest explanations of the civil war.

the left, complaining that members of the "Menchú cult" had called him "everything except an infidel Jew."

Stoll had criticized the "postmodern scholarship" of Said in his book, yet now he pleaded with those gripped by the scandal to keep focused on Guatemala. His point was not to discredit Menchú, he said. He wanted, rather, to contest popular and scholarly explanations of Guatemala's civil war that presented the insurgent Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) and its peasant and Christian affiliates—such as those extolled by Menchú—as growing out of a collective experience of historical racism and economic exploitation. Instead, Stoll argues that conditions in the Western Highlands were improving for most indigenous peasants in the 1970s and that the state had conducted widespread repression not to uphold an unjust system but merely "to get at" the EGP, which was largely led by middle-class urban radicals with little connection to or support in the peasant communities they presumed to liberate. It was the guerrillas, therefore, who pre-empted the possibility of peaceful reform by bringing to power the "homicidal wing" of the military. Mayans, for their part, joined the rebels in droves only to escape state terror, not because social conditions drove them—or ideals motivated them—to make a revolution.

To make his case, Stoll actually focuses less on Rigoberta Menchú than on her father, Vicente, presenting him as a litigious landowner

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ing on tracing nearly every act of aggression Menchú attributes to *Ladinos*, planters or security forces back to an original provocation committed by her father. Nowhere is this shadow narrative more perversely applied than in his account of an event that serves as the climax of both Menchú's memoir and Stoll's riposte: the January 1980 firebombing of the Spanish Embassy, which resulted in the death of Vicente Menchú and more than thirty other peasants and university students who were protesting escalating military repression in the countryside, including the killing of Petrocinio Menchú. Investigations by the Spanish government, the Catholic Church and the United Nations all confirmed Menchú's description of

from the Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico—the aforementioned UN truth commission—which released its findings in early 1999, shortly after the Menchú controversy broke. Based on more than 8,000 interviews and extensive archival and regional research conducted by a staff of more than 200, the CEH, like Stoll, understands that the escalating civil war emerged from the fault lines of local conflicts, including petty family grievances and parochial land conflicts, often among peasants and between indigenous communities. But it places its examination of any given clash within the broader context of a militarized plantation economy where nonindigenous elites fought to hold on to their monopoly

control over land, labor, markets, credit and transportation. As to the town of Chimel, commission investigators recognized local feuds between peasants but also found evidence that *Ladino* planters

did play a crucial role in instigating violence and dispossession in the 1960s and '70s. On the key point of chronology, which is ultimately the hook on which Stoll's case dangles, the CEH documents a clear pattern of repression enacted by planters, *Ladinos* and security forces in the indigenous highlands well before the arrival of the guerrillas in the 1970s. Stoll says the army showed up in Chimel only after the EGP guerrillas executed two *Ladinos* in the spring of 1979, thus laying blame for the ensuing spiral of events that claimed the life of Menchú's brother and mother and the destruction of Chimel at the feet of her father's allies. But CEH researchers found that the military's arrival in the region, and the start of its harassments, predated these killings.

The CEH is concerned less with identifying who fired the first shot in any one skirmish than with understanding the larger causes of the civil war. Starting with an introduction that provides staggering statistical evidence of inequality—Guatemala's health, education, literacy and nutritional indicators continued to be among the most unjust in the world despite an abundance of natural wealth—the CEH's final report offers a damning analysis of Guatemalan history:

From independence in 1821, an event led by the country's elite, an authoritarian state was created that excluded the majority of Guatemalans; it was racist in theory and practice and served to protect the interests of

a small, privileged elite.... State violence has been fundamentally aimed against the excluded, the poor, and the Maya, as well as those who struggled in favor of a just and more equitable society.... Thus a vicious circle was created in which social injustice led to protest and subsequently to political instability, to which there were always only two responses: repression or military coups.

Contrary to those who would blame the romance of revolution for the insurgency, the commission concluded that the state, confronted with movements demanding reform, "increasingly resorted to violence and terror in order to maintain social control. Political violence was thus a direct expression of structural violence."

To questions concerning her schooling and her brother's execution, Menchú has offered straightforward answers. In a 1999 interview, she said she omitted discussing her experience as a student and servant in the Colegio Belga because she hoped to protect the identities of the Catholic nuns who were involved in the kind of pastoral activism associated with liberation theology. "How I would have loved to tell of all the experiences I had," she said, but "the last thing I would have wanted during those years was to associate the Belgian school with me." Menchú did not study with the rest of the students, and she took classes part time a few days a week in the afternoon, working as a maid to pay for her room and board, cleaning the school in the morning and evening, earning twelve quetzals a month (about \$12). She admits she did not witness the murder of her brother, but she relates an account of his killing, including the disputed fact that he was burned alive, from her mother. "And in response to whether my brothers, my father, were rich," she said to accusations that her family was relatively well-off, "go to Chimel and you will see for yourself."

Menchú would not be the first partisan or literary notable to rearrange events in his or her life. Think of Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain. The untruths of Henry Kissinger, also a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, are legion, yet no publisher would feel the need to include a preface setting them in their proper context before reissuing one of his many books. A more appropriate comparison would be with Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), who portrayed herself as an alienated, apo-

Recent research has proved Stoll's thesis about Guatemala's revolution to be mostly wrong.

events, and in 2005 a Spanish judge issued an arrest warrant for a former Guatemalan interior minister accused of ordering the bombing.

But on the signal event in the civil war, a naked display of unyielding power when many Guatemalans realized that no reform would be tolerated or petition considered, Stoll cannot help but weigh in. He speculates that the protesters might have intentionally killed themselves to reinforce "the Guatemalan left's cult of martyrdom." It's hard to overstate how extraordinary this statement is, especially coming from a researcher who bases his legitimacy on championing his own fact-based, empirical argumentation over the deductions of a politicized left. There is no tradition of tactical suicide among Guatemalan leftists, and there is not one piece of evidence, not one witness, not even among those critical of the protesters, to support the possibility that the embassy massacre could have been a "revolutionary suicide that included murdering hostages and fellow protesters." But the logic of his argument, if not the facts of the case, compels Stoll to consider it, and in so doing he transforms Vicente Menchú from victim to victimizer.

Subsequent research over the past decade has proved Stoll's provocative thesis about Guatemala's civil war to be largely wrong, while confirming Menchú's interpretation of events. The definitive refutation has come

litical housewife when in fact she was a long-time activist who hailed from a family with deep roots in the left labor movement. Few would consider using Friedan's narrative manipulations to cast doubt on the reality of the experience she was describing.

More than a decade after the scandal, what is notable about *I, Rigoberta Menchú* is not its exaggerations but its realism. Menchú had arrived in Paris emotionally brutalized, her feelings raw, her sense of urgency to tell a compelling story high. She spoke halting Spanish and had come from a society in which most information was transmitted orally, where hearsay and rumor, not documented fact, prevailed. Her memoir is filled with references to the ways paperwork was used to trick or entrap peasants, along with stories of endless days wasted by her father traveling to the capital to sign a succession of meaningless government forms. One passage in particular highlights the impotence of peasant patriarchy when set against state bureaucracy: Menchú recounts that, as a child, her father took her to the government land office, told her to remain absolutely still, and then took off his hat and bowed to a man sitting behind a typewriter. "That's something else I used to dream about—that typewriter," she recalled.

Added to this, she had just survived more than a year of hiding in exile, a period that demanded self-censorship. At the same time, her experience speaking to reporters and solidarity delegations before her Paris interviews had led her to realize the value audiences place on eyewitness accounts. The need to draw attention to Guatemala, which, compared to neighboring Nicaragua and El Salvador, was being ignored by the international press, must have tempted her to place herself at the scene of the many crimes she describes. Menchú did not know her interviews with Burgos would produce a book, much less an international bestseller. She had no experience with the publishing industry. And she certainly did not foresee that every one of her statements would be subject to fine-tooth scrutiny. And yet her narrative hews closely to a truthful chronology, and even her most serious embellishment—that she witnessed her brother being burned to death—"can be considered factual," according to her principal fact-checker.

Scholars commonly discuss *I, Rigoberta Menchú* as reflecting the communal nature of Mayan society, where oral storytelling blurs the line between individual and group experience. Historians Christopher Lutz and George Lovell reach deep into the past to argue that sixteenth-century indigenous

accounts of the Spanish conquest were often written in the collective voice, and that when Menchú, on the first page of her memoir, cautions that her memory is poor and that the story she is about to tell is "not only my life, it's also the testimony of my people," she means it literally. "I can't force them to understand," Menchú repeated in her 1999 interview. "Everything, for me, that was the story of my community is also my own story. I did not come from the air."

But over the past decade, as greater light has been thrown on the process that led to the publication of *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, its author has emerged even more as a determined, distinctive individual. In one account, Elisabeth Burgos, then working toward a doctorate in ethnopsychiatry—a new discipline used to treat Paris's burgeoning immigrant population, many from France's former colonies—had wanted to interview a generic "Guatemalan Mayan woman," not Menchú in particular. And aside from supplying the testimony, Menchú was not involved in the transcription, editing, revising or translation of the book. Yet the two principals who did carry out those tasks—Burgos and Arturo Taracena Arriola, a Guatemalan historian and EGP representative in Paris—confirm that Menchú took control of the interview, speaking in a strong, certain voice. Though Taracena and Burgos suggested topics to be covered, they, Taracena reports, had to "rethink the outline" because Menchú's "narrative capacity" went "beyond what we had originally conceived.... There was a profound literary quality to Rigoberta Menchú's voice." The editors corrected Menchú's poor Spanish grammar and syntax, and arranged her account chronologically, but, Taracena remarks, the "book is a narration only by Rigoberta, with her own rhythm, with her own inventions, if there are any, with her own emotions."

Burgos withdrew during the interview process, applying her doctoral training in ethnopsychiatry to treat Menchú as a psychoanalyst would an analysand. That is, she gave Menchú time to talk. And considering her clandestine life in Guatemala and exile in Mexico, swinging between bouts of depression and episodes of intense political activity, Menchú needed it. "Everything was piling up together," she remembers of hiding in Guatemala City, "it was all on top of me." In bed for days at a time and refusing

to eat, Menchú had few people to talk to. "With all the horrors that I had inside me," she says, "it would have been comforting for me to be able to talk to all the *compañeros*, or people who understood me, people who were sympathetic." But put to work as a servant in a house of nuns, her loneliness grew "worse, because as I washed the clothes, my mind was focused on the whole panorama of my past. There was no-one to tell, no-one in whom I could find some comfort." After fleeing to Mexico, she did have a chance to speak to delegations and reporters, but such encounters are often extremely formulaic, driven by pressure to raise awareness to what was taking place in Guatemala.

Her nearly weeklong interview in Paris therefore was the first sustained opportu-

What Menchú learned from her travails, she learned by her own will and intelligence.

nity Menchú had to process memories and survivor guilt. And what pours forth like a flood is a rich portrait of a complex, unique individual. Menchú sanctifies her father as a paragon of revolutionary virtue, yet she also reveals an emotionally conflictive relationship to a man she alternately renders as loving, determined and nurturing but also quick to anger, prone to drink and despair and ineffectual. Though Menchú exalts Mayan life for political reasons, as well as out of genuine affection, a perceptive reader will find a surface not so still, a struggle not only on behalf of family and community but against them. As Menchú's story unfolds and her world expands, from Chimel to Guatemala as a whole and then to Mexico and beyond, it becomes clear that her progress—in terms of what she discusses (her political education) and what she omits (her formal education, such as it was)—is largely made possible by the turmoil and dislocation she is denouncing. The dissonance that results is irrepressible. "Papá used to be... well, I don't mean foolish exactly because it's the thieves who steal our land who are foolish... Well, they asked my father to sign a paper but he didn't know what it said because he'd never learned to read or write," she recalls, in a passage where Burgos left the ellipses in to capture a hesitant criticism and an implied superiority. It is a hint that Menchú wrestled not just with routine ambivalences of those who enjoy advantages not available to parents but the singular fact

that those advantages were part and parcel of the terror that took your parents' lives and shattered your hometown.

In the midst of social decay, Menchú as a person comes into sharper focus. "I've been in love many times," she says, and considering the inassimilable loss of her family she can be forgiven if her initial explanation for why she rejected marriage and children seems like pamphleteering. But it is soon revealed that her position is less a choice than an effort to get some control over a situation that leaves her little choice. "It puts me in a panic," she admits. "I don't want to be a widow, or a tortured mother." By the end of her story, it is her mother—her body having been left to the vultures until "not a bit... was left, not even her bones"—who emerges as the defining parent. Menchú credits her with pointing to a strategy of emancipation not through collective action or cultural identity but an insurgency of the self, a rebellion against filial expectations. "I don't want to make you stop feeling a woman," Menchú recalls her saying, "but your participation in the struggle must be equal to that of your brothers. But you mustn't join just as another number.... A child is only given food when he demands it. A child who makes no noise gets nothing to eat."

The revolution was defeated. But many of the human rights, indigenous and peasant organizations that continue today to fight to democratize Guatemalan society were founded as popular-front organizations covertly linked to one or another rebel group. One of the lasting contributions of the insurgent organizations, particularly the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres and the Organización Revolucionario del Pueblo en Armas, was to provide a school for critical thinking for poor Guatemalans, many of whom continue to be politically active. As theories of how to understand and act in the world, Marxism and liberation theology gave inhabitants of one of the most subjugated regions in the Americas a way to link their local aspirations to larger national and international movements and to make sense of the kind of everyday, routine forms of violence, as well as stunning displays of terror, that are documented in Menchú's book. It also gave them a means to insist on their consequence as human beings. What makes Menchú's testimony so extraordinary is how far her engagement with ideas clearly outstripped whatever orientation she might have received from organizers. What she learned from her travails, she learned by her own impressive will and intelligence. Her interpretation of events broadly reflects the

concerns of liberation theology, and at times it can sound mechanical. But it is clearly rooted in her personal grappling with the dilemmas of history and her particular experience of power and powerlessness. "The world I live in is so evil, so bloodthirsty, that it can take my life away from one moment to the next," Menchú says, "so the only road open to me is our struggle, the just war. The bible taught me that."

If *I, Rigoberta Menchú* served only as the testament of a failed revolution, a moment in history when the highest collective ideals of

liberation theology crashed headlong into the most vicious distillate of cold war anticommunism, it would be a good book, still worth reading. But what made liberation theology, along with Latin America's New Left more broadly, so potent a threat in a place as inhumane as Guatemala in the 1970s was not just its concern with social justice but its insistence on individual human dignity. This combination of solidarity and insurgent individuality is the heart of Menchú's memoir, and that's what makes it a great, perhaps even immortal, book. ■



Crowds gather at Guangzhou Railway Station for the new year exodus in *Last Train Home*.

Dogged Truths

by STUART KLAWANS

The contour line twitches thoughtfully around the principal figures in the animated feature *My Dog Tulip*, ruffling with the fur of the Alsatian bitch who is the title character and bristling along the surface of the well-worn, sensible wools that encase her narrating owner, J.R. Ackerley. He is drawn as a long-faced, elderly stiff whose head is a little too small for the shoulders that ride up around it. She is drawn as a marvel of fluidity, able to curl or drape herself into any space where she comes to rest—the favorite armchair, the master's bed—or stretch at will into an arrow of excited, inquisitive motion.

Sometimes the frame drawn around these two figures will become crowded with the dowdy stuff of London in the postwar years, all gray and green-gray and graying yellow and washed-out maroon, with a few wisps of blue trying halfheartedly to break through

overhead. (It was "touching and strange that she should find the world so wonderful," Ackerley recalls on the soundtrack, as you see Tulip reveling in the fullness of a garbage-strewn lot, which overlooks the murky waters of a towpath. Choking clouds of soot rise from factories in the distance, while a train clatters and smokes across the trestle bridge that doubles as a horizon line.) At other times, the world's furniture disappears from the picture, and the space is flattened to a sheet of ruled paper—irregularly ruled, as if by a schoolchild in a hurry—where Tulip loses her handsome tan-and-black color and becomes a mere outline, strutting across the surface on her hind legs. The ratio of perceptual detail to conceptual doodling varies, depending on the ratio in the narration between Ackerley's observations and his musings; but always there's that slight yet insistent twitching of

the line, like the twitching of Tulip's tail (or of another part of her anatomy), imparting a material motion to even the most deliberately prosaic of the pictures and reminding you at all times that *My Dog Tulip* is the work of clever hands.

Directed and animated by Paul and Sandra Fierlinger, from a script that Paul Fierlinger based on the much-celebrated memoir published in 1956, *My Dog Tulip* was entirely hand-drawn and hand-painted but made on the computer, without paper. Perhaps this hybrid method helped give the film its old-fashioned, crotchety yet startlingly quick-witted nature, which suits Ackerley's writing so well. The glumly comic self-description he worked up in *My Dog Tulip* (voiced in the film by Christopher Plummer, deploying an extensive repertory of sighs and lip-smacks) was that of an intellectually distinguished Englishman who had reached a certain age and then gone beyond it without having met that special friend. "Gay" would not be the word. Having grown pettish with age, he rejoiced only in his adoring and fortunately incorrigible pet, whose every unembarrassed mic-turition, bowel movement, snarling rebuke to her enemies and frolic through the kitchen's store of vegetables was endearing to him, as an expression of the animal life that he had been denied. In the film, the Fierlingers bring this theme to its appropriate climax in the lengthy sequence devoted to Tulip's mating. Enough to say that the process is extremely funny, in the way of things that are natural and yet messy, clumsy, subject to repeated failure and disruptive of several social milieus, from the suburban self-congratulatory to the shabby-genteel.

Perhaps one of the reasons Paul Fierlinger captures all this so well is that he is in his 70s and knows something about rueful mirth. He, too, might be speaking, whenever the cartoon Ackerley addresses us from his place within a scene. The other main reason, of course, is Fierlinger's twitchy virtuosity.

A sourball candy of a movie worth savoring to its last melting away, *My Dog Tulip* is in its premier theatrical run, playing at Film Forum in New York through September 14.

As the outdoor luncheon party is to French cinema, the briefcase of money to American movies or swirling auto traffic to the Iranians, so are unimaginably large crowds to a certain mode of contemporary Chinese film. They trademark the national experience; they encourage brand loyalty in the

audience. If you want your cast of thousands to be made of flesh and blood, then what can you watch in today's digital era if not a Chinese film?

Last Train Home, an exceptionally strong documentary by Lixin Fan, begins with the money shot: an overhead view of a plaza outside the train station in Guangzhou, where from one edge of the frame to the other all you can see are people packed belly-to-back in a pouring rain. These dots under their umbrellas, though multitudinous, are just some of China's 130 million migrant workers, who pour in from the provinces to take jobs in the industrial cities. They pour back only once every twelve months, flooding the railroad system, when they return to their homes to celebrate the new year.

Last Train Home starts with these masses; but for the most part it is an almost shockingly intimate picture of a few of the individuals, whom Lixin Fan followed over a period of three years. Chen Suqin and her husband, Zhang Changhua, from a rural village in Sichuan, had been bent over sewing machines in Guangzhou for sixteen years at the start of filming, in 2006. Their two children—a 17-year-old girl named Qin and her younger brother, Yang—had been left behind on the farm, to be raised by their grandmother. You see the parents fret over whether they will be able to visit the kids this year. (The camera comes right into the curtained-off cubicle in the factory dormitory, just large enough for a bed, that serves as their living quarters.) You watch as they scramble for scarce and overpriced tickets, get herded along the platform and onto the train, search hopelessly for some nook where they can cram their luggage. (The aisle is so jammed with bodies that you wonder how the camera crew made room for itself, or dared to try.) And as the long, long journey proceeds, you listen to the father's lament: "When we're home, we don't even know what to say to the kids."

The full force of this remark becomes apparent over the course of these annual cycles, as Qin rejects the authority of parents she never knew, going so far as to curse her father and strike him in full view of the camera. So much for paternal dignity; and so much for the only thing the parents did know to say, which was to study hard. Qin quits school and goes on her own to the industrial city, to seek freedom by making herself into fresh meat. I wish I could say this is the final painful irony of *Last Train Home*; but the Chinese economic miracle will not be done with these people until every human tie has been severed and every

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The story is no less devastating for having become familiar in outline and some of its details. You may have seen versions of it in Jia Zhangke's great films, in Yung Chang's documentary *Up the Yangtze* (on which Lixin Fan worked as a sound recordist and associate producer) or in Micha Peled's *China Blue*. No matter. *Last Train Home* has its own contributions to make: a painstaking revelation of individual characters, and an unforgettable closing image of the masses shuffling out of the Guangzhou train station at night, as the plaza, and the father's life, finally empty out.

Because modern life is starved for romantic comedies and stylish caper films, I am delighted to be able to recommend a new one of each. They're identical and are titled *Heartbreaker*, as in "seducer, deceiver, glamourpuss, cavalier manipulator of affections," all of which tags nicely fit this slick first feature by Pascal Chaumeil. Assuming that a few laughs and sighs, a slapstick whirl and a fantasy getaway to Monaco are all you expect, perhaps the only common meaning of the title that does not suit the movie is "disappointment."

Vulpine and crafty Romain Duris, working in his light charmer mode, stars as Alex, an apparently omniscient con man who specializes in breaking up unhappy couples for a fee. His disguises are many, but the method is always the same: to show the woman that she deserves something better in life, such as him. (Not that she can have him.) Needless to say, he is heading for a fall, which he gets when a wealthy semiangster hires him to prevent the impending marriage of his daughter Juliette (Vanessa Paradis). She is lithe, poised, cool, redheaded, deliciously gap-toothed, slightly imperious and engaged to a man who is similarly superior in every way. Alex has no choice. For once, he must concoct a persona that will make the woman despise him—which means, of course, that for once he will become the character tingling for a better life.

Having entered the director's trade as an apprentice to Luc Besson, Chaumeil learned lessons from the pop-movie master that have proved valuable in *Heartbreaker*: keep the action moving, make the colors bright and don't forget the audience has paid to be entertained. Nothing that happens will be too unpredictable, or even a little deep. But interesting notions do pop up along the way—the possibility that someone might lie nonstop yet be truthfully perceived, or might reveal a guilty

secret and have it received as no darker than beige—and these may appeal to ticket-buyers as a welcome bonus.

I vote to accept.

As it happened, I saw Robert Rodriguez's *Machete* on a day when the latest cache of rotting corpses to be discovered in northern Mexico—seventy-two of them, of all ages and both sexes—became the subject of debate. Had their murderers been a gang that principally smuggled drugs or people? You would not believe how this question intruded on my enjoyment of the dismemberments, disembowelments, impalings, beheadings and all-purpose flayings that Rodriguez, in his exuberance, splattered across the screen in the name of social criticism and Mexican pride, in a film that has been much awaited by the people who await this sort of thing.

I admit, I might have been one of them. When told that I will see Cheech Marin play a shotgun-wielding priest known as Padre, I am likely to show up for a movie. And when the stock figure of the betrayed cop turned vengeance-seeking fugitive is going to be played by Danny Trejo as a *federal* called Machete (you'll never guess why), I feel an extra surge of adrenaline. Trejo is credible; he's got the kind of face that brings a dark alley with it. Subsidiary pleasures? In my advance reading of the credits, these included Michelle Rodriguez and Jessica Alba paired in shamelessly pandering tough-girl roles. (*Machete* makes no secret of being a boys' night out.) In the event, I got some laughs out of Robert De Niro as an immigrant-bashing Texas politician who sounds like Robert De Niro when away from the cameras and like George W. Bush when the red lights are on.

As you will understand from that latter detail, *Machete* is a fantasy about slicing and dicing all those gringos who spread fear and hatred of Mexican immigrants, even while profiting from having them in ready, downtrodden supply. I respect the desire. I have come to question whether indulging it as pop-culture fun is the liberating gesture that so many of us (Rodriguez included) grew up thinking it to be. By the end of *Machete*—trust me, I'm not giving away much—the film has resolved into a battle of good versus bad vigilantes. But when Mexicans outside the movie theater are expendable in batches of seventy-two, I'm not sure why one group's lawless bloodletting should be more glorious than another's.

I think I liked Danny Trejo better as the uncle in the *Spy Kids* movies, where his favorite tool was a rubber band. ■

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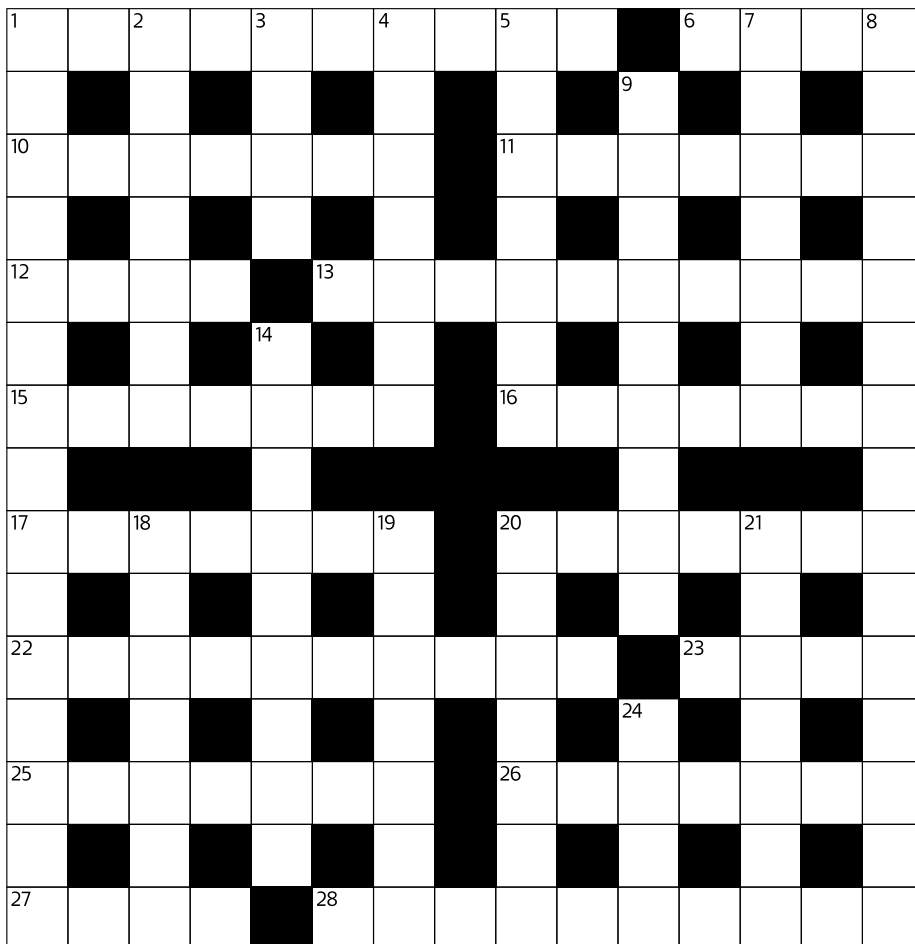
FRANK W. LEWIS

ACROSS

- 1 The cab toll isn't fixed, but rather, spread. (10)
- 6 Shut out in this manner? (4)
- 10 Wearing, for example, around a sculptor. (7)
- 11 Evidently some disturbance in the plant. (7)
- 12 Only productive when made by sacrifice. (4)
- 13 Flower pots tie in a better arrangement, possibly. (10)
- 15 Sort of this to a sort of 13, worn by some men. (7)
- 16 Master of Turkey. (7)
- 17 and 20 With this, you should be lucky to be well-known. (4,3,7)
- 22 Republicans not about to be hosts, perhaps. (10)
- 23 Septennial problem? (4)
- 25 It started around 1000 BC, that is, about a misplaced organ... (4,3)
- 26 ...but then, no age is bad for such feelings! (7)
- 27 Go with Burns in full complement. (4)
- 28 Perhaps one on the 4th of July. (10)

DOWN

- 1 Hamlet evidently didn't imply it was too high. (3,4,2,6)
- 2 and 18 The air of an old sailor suggests one should waft a little thistle in someone's directoon. (4,3,3,4)
- 3 It means he goes out. (4)
- 4 Shelters, perhaps, from so long a composition. (7)
- 5 Funny he was in ancient Rome! (7)
- 7 It might be found near the lift. (7)
- 8 In the navy, would one get only a sandwich and a glass of water, perhaps? (9,6)
- 9 The character of the Assyrians, Babylonians, etc. (9)
- 14 Could it describe an agreement to have a bill contain a rate that isn't fixed? (9)
- 18 See 2 down
- 19 Allow to get into deep trouble when empty. (7)
- 20 Shakespeare's lover sighed like one. (7)
- 21 Straighten out. (7)
- 24 Othello was one to bring up some space. (4)



This puzzle originally appeared in the September 27, 1975, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1599

S	E	P	A	R	A	T	E	T	A	B	L	E	S
A	O	I	H	S	D	O	H						
Y	A	W	E	D	I	M	M	O	V	A	B	L	E
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